NEA Today
WASHINGTON, D.C. APRIL 1995
A NEWSPAPER FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATIO

Dad Can Read

That's good news for his son

see page 4

Bob and Matthew Mendez

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Finding Professional Satisfaction

Teaching should be one of the most satisfying professions on our planet, right up there with saving lives and composing sublime music.

Should be.

But for all too many teachers it isn't.

Children come to us heart and minds still open, each representing a new hope for our troubled species. They come to us with an astonishing capacity to learn, a capacity that makes everyone who has ever tried to learn a new language as an adult green with envy.

And, as teachers, we have the privilege of seeing a child's face light up after that child struggles to figure out something and then it dawns. For many teachers, these are the moments that keep them going.

But why don't more teachers experience real professional satisfaction in their jobs? Because a lot of teachers are stuck in stultifying educational bureaucracies—systems based on fear rather than aspirations, systems that put professionals into isolation boxes known as classrooms.

As education scholar Linda Darling-Hammond has bluntly noted, public education bureaucracies are based on the presumption that most teachers cannot be trusted to make responsible decisions, so several layers of overseers are needed to keep them in line.

NEA President
Keith Geiger

There are teachers scattered across America, however, who *have* found genuine professional satisfaction. It's unmistakable—you can see it in their eyes and hear it in their voices when they talk about their work. *Teacher TV,* coproduced by the Learning Channel and NEA, has chronicled many of their stories.

They teach in very different public schools in very different communities. In Rawlings Elementary School in Pinellas County, Florida; in the Key School in Indianapolis; in Travis Heights Elementary School in Austin, Texas; in Horace Mann Middle School in San Francisco, and in other schools—rural, suburban, and urban.

But this they have in common: They've all cast off the bureaucratic strait-jacket of the late 19th century educational system and become intimately engaged in the building of a true learning community.

They've had to learn how to do many things they never learned in teacher education: How to function outside the isolation box in an environment that is cross-grade, interdisciplinary, and collegial to the core. How to take control of curriculum as well as the school clock. And how to interact with parents and the community.

The faculty-led, site-based, and parent-involved overhaul of a public school is, in the words of teacher Julie Craven at Horace Mann Middle School, "both exhilarating and exhausting."

It means taking a bumpy, poorly posted road. It means being willing to make mistakes and learn from them.

Once teachers have traveled down that road, however bruising the journey, they never want to return to the status quo. "When you see the children learning more than you ever thought possible," says Key School teacher Beverly Hoeltke, "then you know it was worth the effort."

In Glenview, Illinois, teachers, administrators, and school board members have replaced their conventional collective bargaining contract with a Constitution for their 3,500-student, K-8 school district in a middle-class suburb north of Chicago. It's a revolutionary document that makes teachers full partners in the day-to-day running of the system.

And last spring, the Glenview Constitution was renewed for another three years.

Underlying all such serious public school reform initiatives is a vision shared by respected professionals, a vision of providing the highest quality education possible to all students.

This vision is more than a good idea. It's a force in people's hearts—a force powerful enough to overcome entrenched bureaucracies and transform American public education into a system that meets the needs of our nation.

It's also a force powerful enough to ward off the retrograde plans of those who would dismantle public education in the name of saving it.

7 Suitable for Children?

Children's author Eve Bunting makes no apologies for *Smoky Nights*, her controversial new book about a boy who loses his cat during the L. A. riots. The best way to protect kids, she says, is to tell them the truth.

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What is outcomes-based education and why are people saying such terrible things about it? A look at the fight over OBE in Pennsylvania—its causes, effects, and legacy nationwide.

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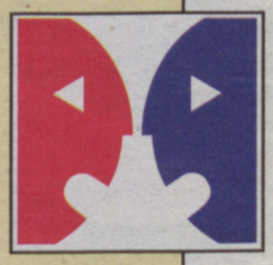
Then head for Seattle, where a groundbreaking agreement cut central office bureaucracy, sent the $5 million saved directly to individual schools, and gave parents and school employees the authority to spend it.

39 Debate: Should Police Patrol Public Schools?

Yes, says an Oklahoma parts manager: "Their very presence is a crime deterrent." No, counters a Rhode Island teacher: "We can avoid a police state by routinely practicing the security measures already in place."



Cover photo by Bob Riha, Jr.

NEA Today April 1995
Vol. 13, No. 8

NEA TODAY is mailed to all NEA members. Annual subscription price: $2.38 (included in membership dues and available only as a part of membership). Institutional subscription price: $15.00 domestic and $22.00 foreign.

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NEA President: Keith Geiger

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NEA TODAY (ISSN 0734-7219) is published 9 times a year, monthly October, November, December, February, March, April, May, and biweekly in September by the National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Second class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices.

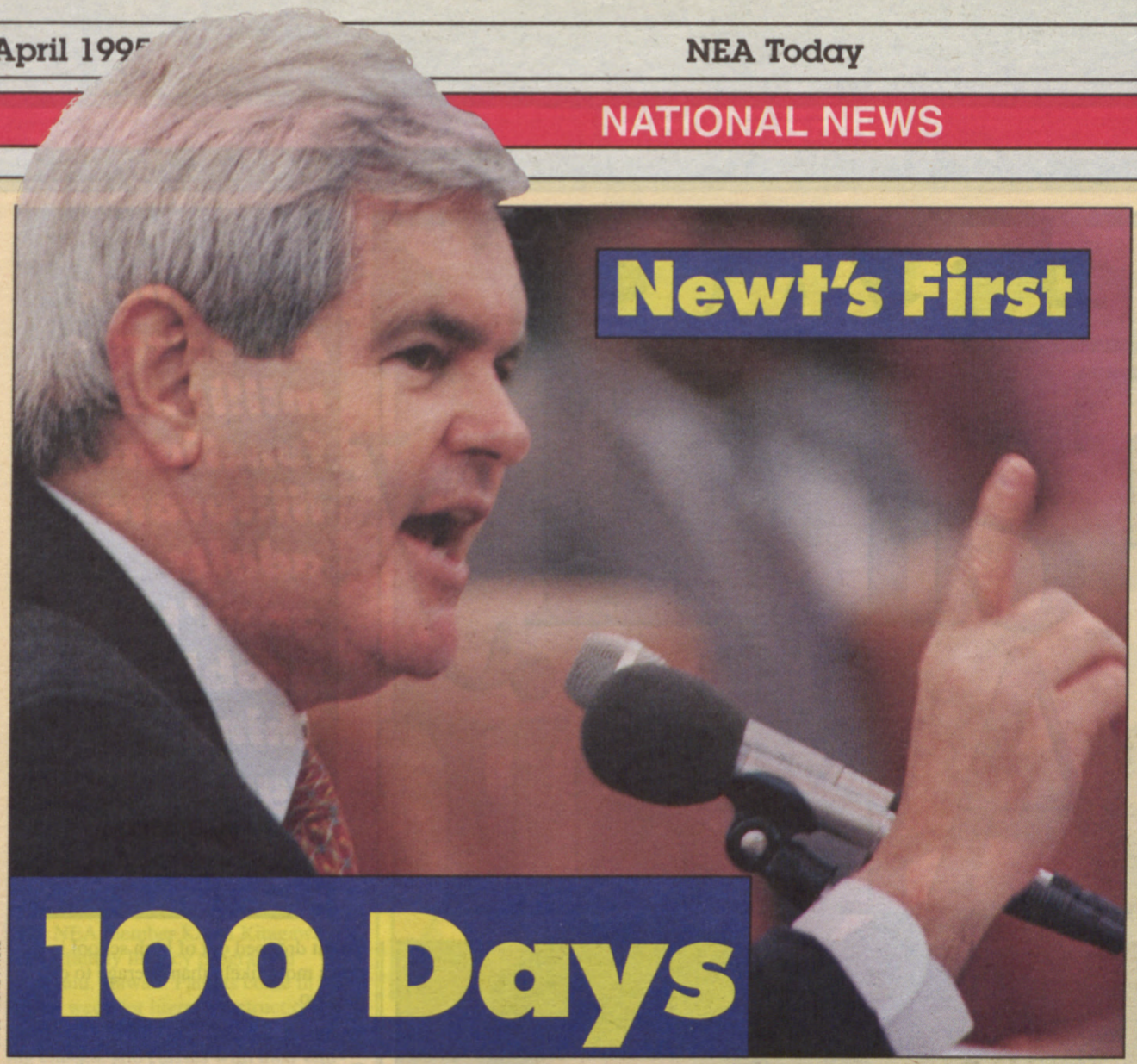
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEA TODAY, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Telephone: 202/822-7207.

Unsolicited feature stories and news items are invited, but NEA TODAY can make no advance commitment to publish any manuscript. Manuscripts accompanied by self-addressed envelopes bearing sufficient postage will be returned within four months if rejected.

Although advertising is screened, advertisement does not imply NEA endorsement of the product or the views expressed.

NATIONAL NEWS



Wide World Photo

Newt's First 100 Days

Congress is rushing to enact the 'Contract with America' while paying no mind to the details—like feeding kids.

"The American public expects us to cut spending and downsize government," says Wisconsin Congressman David Obey, "but I don't think they expect us to make war on kids."

And yet that's just what the "Contract With America" calls for—if you take the time to read between the lines.

If House Speaker Newt Gingrich has his way, you won't have time to read anything. The Speaker and his allies in Congress are racing through their legislative agenda, bundling issues together, and creating confusion because they're well aware that their most controversial proposals, if considered one by one, would never pass.

Judge for yourself. Among other things, Republican leaders propose:

➤ Dismantling the federal school lunch and breakfast programs, replacing them with state block grants, and slashing total funding.

➤ Cutting summer food programs to preschoolers in child care by 45 percent in fiscal year 1996.

➤ Eliminating the $28.8 million program that helps homeless kids enroll, attend, and succeed in school.

➤ Cutting housing assistance programs that HUD estimates will cause 32,000 more families to become homeless by July.

➤ Terminating the entire $481 million Safe and Drug-Free Schools program.

➤ Eliminating $108 million in federal aid to tech-prep programs.

➤ Cutting Title I money to educate poor children by $105 million.

➤ Slashing bilingual education funds by $38.5 million—or 25 percent.

➤ Eliminating a summer jobs program that would affect more than 600,000 low-income youth.

And where will the savings from these cuts go, if Congress adopts the Contract With America?

Some $45 billion would go, over the next five years, for the financing of what Speaker Gingrich calls the "Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act." This Contract With America proposal would exempt half of all profits from the sale of stocks, bonds, and real estate from income tax. Over 70 percent of the benefits from this exemption, according to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, will go to taxpayers earning more than $200,000 a year. These wealthy families will save $16,372 a year in federal income taxes.

Other savings from cutting programs for kids will go toward increasing military spending—at a time when the current U.S. annual military budget of $271 billion nearly matches the military spending of the rest of the world combined.

—Stefanie Weiss

What You Can Do

Let your representatives in Washington know that you don't want to see more hungry and homeless children in your classrooms. Write to the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515, and the U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, or call 202/224-3121.

What's Newt's Game?

If you hear Newt tell it, he's just trying to cut the costs of administering programs from Washington by shifting the same amount of money to the states in block grants. State governments, he argues, can spend the money more efficiently and need the budgetary flexibility.

But, as the case of child nutrition demonstrates, Gingrich's block grant approach masks deep budget cuts. Over five years, the Gingrich plan would cut school meals programs by $2 billion and other nutrition programs for poor women and children by $5 billion. In addition, the Gingrich plan would allow states to use 20 percent of the nutrition block grant for other purposes altogether.

"This just forces states to spread the pain," says California Congressman George Miller. "Kids will have to compete with other programs for fewer total dollars."

HEROES & ZEROES

And the Winners Are...

For Best Philanthropist in a Starring Role, none other than Paul Newman. Okay, it hurts to see the hustler selling pasta sauce, but sending all the profits to charity sure takes away the sting. Since 1982, Newman's given $62 million to good causes, including the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for children with cancer and other serious illnesses. Talk about turning lemons into (Newman's Own) lemonade. Well, what can we say—he's nobody's fool.

The award for Best Special Effects goes, once again, to *Forbes* magazine for skillful distortion. In a recent cover story attacking NEA, *Forbes* uses some wild pyrotechnics to turn NEA's advocacy for equal educational opportunity into a union power grab and make PTA members into bad guys. By having the guts to put its right-wing agenda out in the open, Forbes may be a contender in this category for years to come.

For Best Supporting Corporation, the Good-Neighbor folks, State Farm Insurance. State Farm recently announced a new employee benefit, allowing each of its 67,000 full-time employees one paid day off a year to volunteer in local schools. Inspiring.

For Best Director of an Annual Event, a little known millionaire by the name of David Hooker. Each year (on his own birthday), Hooker picks up his former Williamsburg, Virginia teachers in limousines and airplanes, pays for an extravagant lunch (a.k.a. reunion) at a restaurant decorated in school colors, and provides gifts specially made for the occasion. Total cost: about $10,000 a year. Spielberg, watch out!

For Best Costume Designer, a Norfolk, Virginia principal who hired an image consultant to prepare a dress code for teachers. Pamela Hoffler-Riddick's "designer" dress code regulates skirt lengths down to the inch and delves into everything from perfume strength to fingernail polish to, yes, choice of underwear. The Education Association of Norfolk stands ready to defend any member found in violation, and EAN proposes that teachers receive $10,000 in wardrobe stipends over three years to cover the cost of new duds.

COVER STORY

LITERACY

A Family Affair

You think America's millions of functionally illiterate adults aren't your problem? Think again: they have kids.

Robert Mendez—pictured on the cover and on this page, with his 8-year-old son, Matthew—can read. That wasn't always the case.

Until I reached the age of 35, I was an adult who couldn't read.

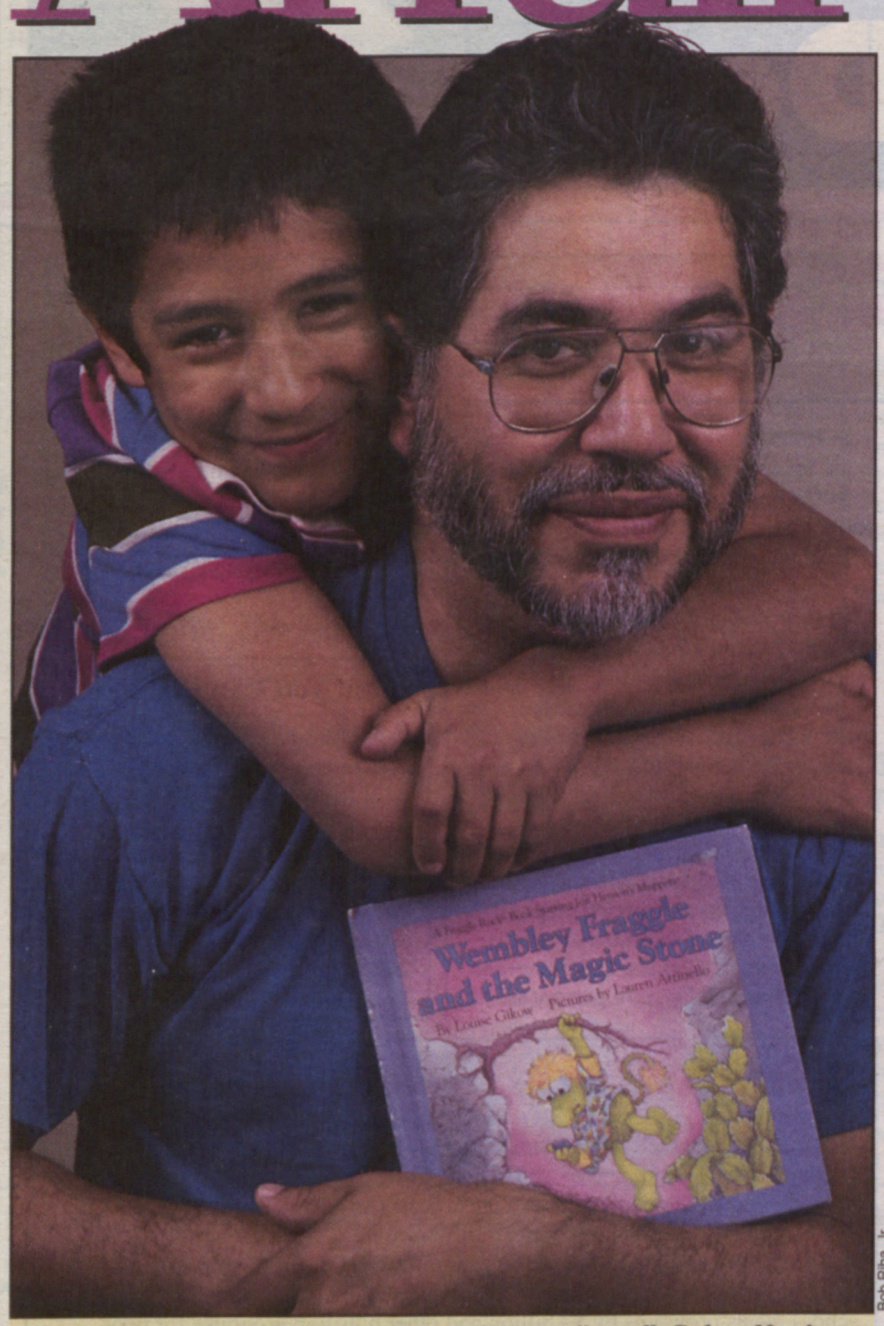
That meant I couldn't read to my children. I couldn't help them with their homework. I couldn't respond to teachers' notes from school. And when those times came around, I avoided them—avoided my own children. That's the pain—the personal hell—of being an illiterate adult.

When you're illiterate, you're not able to read the names off a grocery list or your child's name on a report card. You can't get a better job because it means filling out a job application.

Even when you're successful because you've used your ability to listen and memorize to handle complex tasks like driving the freeways or to perform well at work, you're still a man who can't read.

My fear of words developed when I was seven years old. It continued each time I was held back in class, each time I was called stupid by another child. And each time I faced printed words, that same fear and panic rose up again.

I knew I didn't want that for my children, especially the younger ones who I could still help. So at 35, I battled back my demons, walked into a literacy center, and asked for help.



Bob Riha, Jr.

"It was magic when the words began to make sense," recalls Robert Mendez, shown here with son Matthew and the first book Mendez was able to read cover-to-cover.

Across the country, there are 90 million adults who can't read at a fifth grade level. Forty million of them can barely read or write at all.

These are tragic numbers for America—devastating when you consider that children of functionally illiterate adults are twice as likely as other kids to be functionally illiterate themselves.

"We're facing an intergenerational crisis of illiteracy," says Sharon Darling, president of the National Center for Family Literacy.

"Undereducated adults and educationally at-risk children interlock," Darling says. "They're bound so tightly together that excellence in education is an empty dream for kids who go home each afternoon to families where literacy is neither practiced nor valued.

"Far too many at-risk children are at-risk because their parents are undereducated, even afraid of school and teachers," Darling continues. "That translates into one generation after another of parents not having the confidence to go into schools and take part in their child's education."

Statistics show that a child whose parent dropped out of high school is six times more likely than average to drop out, too.

"If you could get parents to come back and finish their educations," Darling says, "you could make them comfortable with school. Then they in turn, could teach their children by example to enjoy school and learn."

In a nutshell, that's what family literacy programs are all about.

In the last 10 years, the number of family literacy programs across the country has jumped from 500 to more than 5,000. Whether you call the program Even Start, Families for Learning, or Project Literacy, the goal of family literacy programs is the same—stopping the cycle of failure.

Recent studies show they work. Not one of the 2,500 3- and 4-year-old participants in a family literacy program evaluated in a 1993 study repeated a grade in elementary school. Without the program, Darling says 25 percent of at-risk kids are likely to repeat at least one year prior to fourth grade.

Moreover, once these children entered elementary school, they were reported to be highly motivated to learn and performed well.

Many educators deal with adult illiteracy every day—some more directly than others.

➤ Chloe Gentry, an instructional assistant at Jacob Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky, dropped out of high school to get married. Five years ago, she and her four-year-old son Bradley enrolled in a family literacy program at Schaffer Elementary School.

"When we entered the program, Bradley wouldn't speak. He wouldn't let go of me," Gentry says. "Now he's a happy nine-year-old doing well in all of his classes. Without this program, he might have ended up in a remedial class."

➤ Michigan science teacher and

Ray Tanaka/Photoplus

COVER STORY

NEA member Bob Miller hosts a public access television talk show that aired a series of programs on literacy. "Some of the people we featured had memorized freeway systems, or painstakingly copied words like 'cold' or '''''flu' on notes they sent back to teachers.

"People will admit to drug addiction, spousal abuse, just about anything but not knowing how to read," Miller notes. "There's a shame built up around illiteracy that makes it very difficult to break through."

➤ Margaret Lee is an NEA member and coordinator of a mobile parent resource center in rural Emporia, Virginia.

"One day," Lee recalls, "a student's father came into the center while we were making our rounds in one of the neighborhoods. He picked up one of the children's books and leafed through it slowly, cover to cover.

"Then his son looked up at him and said, 'Why'd you pick that up? You know you can't read.' It was heartbreaking."

➤ NEA member Karen Kitagawa runs a family literacy program in Honolulu, Hawaii. Parents come in four days a week for literacy instruction, math and science, and English, parenting classes, and classes with their children.

"So many of these adults start with few skills, very low self-esteem, and memories of bad experiences," Kitagawa explains. "By fulfilling these parents' desire to help their children and help themselves, we fill a void in their lives and in our school community."

➤ Robert Mendez, pictured on the opposite page, with his son, is an educator, too.

In addition to his job as plant manager at Orchard Elementary School in Los Angeles, he's vice-chair of the California Literacy Foundation, sits on the board of Laubach Literary, and travels the country speaking to newly literate adults.

Mendez has published articles and poetry in magazines, even spoken at a United Nations conference on literacy. But all of these accomplishments pale compared to the satisfaction Mendez gets from helping his son succeed.

Every day, I sit with my son Matthew and help him with his homework. I read with him, help with his reports, and take him to the library. Doing this brings me closer to him.

This is what I tell adults who are sometimes frustrated with their progress and think about giving up. I tell them to hang in there, that it isn't important that you read quickly to your child—it's that you care enough to do it that's your success.

Literacy is more than learning to read. It's getting rid of the luggage of guilt and shame. It's realizing you're opening doors to worlds you thought were closed to you.

It's realizing that schools aren't places you dread walking into anymore. They're places where you've rediscovered the joy of learning.

That's the legacy I want to pass on to my son.

—Anita Merina

E-mail NEAToday3@AOL.COM

Ralph Homan

Where it all began: Chloe and Bradley Gentry, now graduates of a family literacy program, credit the program for her job and his success in school.

Hawaii instructional assistant Wendy Jimenez and daughter Chassidie share one of their favorite books. They're graduates of a family literacy program.

RESOURCES

➤ The National Center for Family Literacy, Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200, 325 West Main St., Louisville, KY 40202-4251. Provides assistance in beginning a family literacy project, training, and materials. Sponsors an annual conference, this year April 23-25 in Louisville, Kentucky. Publishes *A Guide to Funding Sources for Family Literacy*, $10, including s&h. 502/584-1133.

➤ Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS), Box 2, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213. A joint venture between Cap Cities/ABC and PBS, this project provides publications, videotapes, information on funding, even materials in Spanish devoted to literacy efforts. Groups and volunteers, call 412/622-1491.

➤ Literacy Volunteers of America. 5795 Widewaters Parkway, Syracuse, NY 13214, 315/445-8000.

➤ Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, 1002 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20007.

➤ Laubach Literacy Action, 1320 Jamesville Ave., Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210, 315/422-9121.

➤ National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education, 1118 22nd St. N.W., Washington DC 20037, 202/429-9292.

➤ *Listening to Mother's Voices*. Education Writers Association Report on the impact of literacy programs. Available for $10 from EWA, 1333 H St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

➤ *Becoming Literate About Literacy.* Policy Information Center. Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey 08541-0001. This report—available for $7.50—reviews the results of the 1992 study by the National Center for Education Statistics, *Adult Literacy in America*. This report is available for $7.50.

➤ If you have access to NEA Online, NEA's Electronic Online Network, you can find out more about programs in adult and family literacy in the Resource Pavilion in America Online's Education Marketplace.

To discuss adult literacy or family literacy go to the Adult Education area in NEA Online's Teaching and Learning Message Board.

For more information about NEA Online, see page 26.

➤ *AmeriCorps State Grants*. This program, developed by the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS) and pushed by the White House has already funded several literacy programs. But now the program's in jeopardy, threatened by a Congressional move to cut AmeriCorps funding. Write to your Representative or Senators. For program information, contact your state AmeriCorps commission or call CNCS at 202/606-5000.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Preventive Medicine

Educators try to stop student-on-student sexual harassment with a few lessons on teasing and bullying in the early grades.

It doesn't happen overnight. Kids just don't wake up at the onset of puberty and start sexually harassing each other. According to Nan Stein, a Wellesley College researcher and expert on sexual harassment, harassing behaviors can be traced to early days of teasing, bullying, and bathroom humor.

That's why Stein's been working with elementary teachers to pilot a sexual harassment prevention program.

"Teachers saw things like Friday-Flip-Up Day (when boys pull up girls' skirts on the playground) or Grab-the-Private-Parts-of-Girls Week or simulated sex on the playground," Stein says, "and they asked me for help. They want to stop this kind of behavior before it starts."

Harassment often starts innocently enough, with boys and girls chasing each other on the playground or innocently kissing each other. But it can escalate into inappropriate behavior later on. At that point, most kids say, "No one ever told me I shouldn't do this."

The kids in Emily Gaberman's fifth grade class can't say that anymore.

Two years ago, Gaberman and two other fifth grade teachers in Brookline, Massachusetts—Deanne Dixon and Nancy Springer—began working with Stein to pilot a program students call "Bully Proof."

The teachers asked kids to talk about behaviors they had experienced and seen around school and write about them in journals. Then they acted out some of the experiences, giving kids the opportunity to be both the teaser and the kid being teased.

Students were even given the chance to be an eyewitness to the "harassment," forcing them to think about how and when to intervene or report the behavior to an adult.

By the end of the unit, the kids knew strategies and interventions for handling a bullying or teasing situation. And they applied their classroom learning to the playground.

This past fall, a group of girls who'd been part of the pilot program—and are now in seventh grade—approached principal Carol Schraft about a boy who was grabbing and harassing them.

"They have a clear sense of what activities shouldn't happen," Schraft says. "They understand that they have rights and recourse."

Without the training, too many students would have no idea that adults care about this type of behavior.

Last spring, for example, teachers and administrators in Brookline overheard a group of girls who were not part of the pilot program complaining about a boy's behavior. He was grabbing girls and had even threatened to rape one of them. Not one of the girls involved had told her parents or any adult at school.

"Prevention is the key," says San Francisco elementary school principal Sandra Leigh. "The problems erupt in junior high or middle school, because everyone ignores the patterns that start in the elementary grades."

—Melissa Etlin
NEA Human and Civil Rights

For more information on teasing and bullying training for students in grades one through five, call Nan Stein at Wellesley College, 617/283-2562.

Flirting or Hurting?

Want to help your students in grades 6-12 understand and stop sexually harassing behaviors?

NEA's Professional Library recently published *Flirting or Hurting?*, a teacher's guide on the topic that includes lesson plans, case studies and role plays, resources, suggested activities, and relevant readings.

Written by Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom, the guide is a joint project of the NEA Women and Girls Center for Change and the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

To order, contact the NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516, 800/229-4200. Order number #1864-8-00-F. Members, $15.95; non-members, $19.95.

WASHINGTON WATCH

Person To Watch

As Senate minority leader, Senator Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota) is charged with the critical—and increasingly difficult—role of preserving the accomplishments of the 103rd Congress and encouraging bipartisanship in the 104th.

The Contract's Out on Children

The deep cuts in education and human services proposed by Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia) and his allies amount to "an all-out assault on the nation's most vulnerable citizens—its children," NEA President Keith Geiger told the media. At presstime, House Republican leaders were advocating massive cuts in special education, Title I, and student aid. Plus, they propose eliminating the federal school lunch program, funds to educate homeless children, and summer jobs programs for teens.

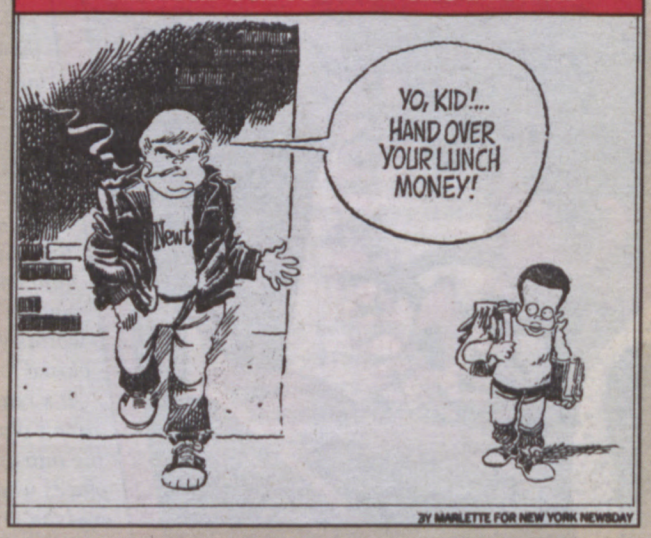
The Challenges Still Ahead

Once members of the House finish racing through Newt Gingrich's 100-day agenda, the battleground shifts to the Senate, where child advocates hope some of the most outrageous of "Contract With America" proposals will be considered more carefully and moderated. Without such action, these proposals will spell a nightmare for America's children.

What You Can Do

Don't let Newt Gingrich take food from your students' mouths. Contact your senators (U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510). Let them know how important child development and education programs are to achieving our national education goals and improving the lives of America's children.

Political Cartoon of the Month



Congressional Quote of the Month

"Children don't have lobbyists, and they don't make political contributions, but they do deserve a future. Let's not take away their chance to have one."
Rep. Louise Slaughter
(D-New York)

Meet:

Hans Gutknecht

Eve Bunting

Suitable For Children?

Smoky Night *isn't Eve Bunting's first controversial children's book. A prolific author with more than 100 titles to her credit, Bunting's written about homelessness, migrant workers, illiteracy, and war.*

But **Smoky Night,** *winner of the 1995 Caldecott Award for illustrations by David Diaz, is the first to stir up such emotion. One reviewer said the book—about a boy who loses his cat during an inner-city riot—ought to carry a warning label because its contents "may be deeply disturbing to young children."*

In a recent interview with **NEA Today** *assistant editor Stefanie Weiss, Bunting spoke softly and deliberately—but minced no words.*

Why write about a riot?
I live in Pasadena, 10 miles from downtown L.A. The night the Rodney King verdict came in, I was speaking in the public library.

When I got home and turned on the TV, almost instantly my thoughts went to the children who were there. What would it be like to be one of those children? How does a parent explain this to a child? How does a teacher explain why schools were damaged or closed?

Is the book appropriate for young children?
It's not meant for kids below seven or eight, but there's no upward level on it. I meant it for any kid and every kid. I think we can all use it.

How do you respond to those who say this book will only scare kids?
I knew this book might be criticized as not suitable for children. People say, "Do children need to know this? Can't children be children?" Well, I write my share of books that are full of little bears—and I think bedtime stories are terribly important. But this is not a bedtime story, and there was a time when it could not have been published.

Is there no protecting our children anymore?
I think the protection we can give them is the truth. I think we have to try somehow to extend their understanding of the difficult problems we have. Children can deal with the truth if they have a caring person to help them try to understand it. I don't want to write down to children at any age.

Your book about the Vietnam War Memorial, *The Wall*, is a real tearjerker. Do kids need sad books?
Yes. Sadness is going to touch every child's life. I think in *The Wall,* I was trying to say that sometimes a war can be necessary, but people are dead just the same, so let's not glorify war any more than we have to.

I get more letters on *The Wall* than any of my other books. So many children have had grandfathers who died in the war. It's very touching to me to know that my book can make them feel that someone understands.

How do you come up with your ideas?
I'm inspired by things I read or hear or see on television that touch me in some way. I won't write a book unless I feel it emotionally and, having grown up in Northern Ireland, prejudice and violence bother me a lot.

Do you try to send a message?
I don't ever start off to give a message in my books, although often it must seem as though I do. I like to write about loving and caring and how both can ease everyone's way through life. Maybe that sounds Pollyana-ish, maybe it's optimism carried to the nth degree, but that's what I want to do.

How should your books be taught?
I'd like teachers to use my books to open up topics that aren't easy to talk about. I'd like teachers to read my books out loud, then ask the kids what they think. A teacher could say, "This is fiction, but does this kind of thing really happen? Is there something we can do to make this wrong a little better?"

Do your books change kids or inspire kids to change the world?
Maybe my books change their thinking or promote thinking. I got a letter from a little girl who'd read *Fly Away Home*, which is about a boy and his father who live in an airport because they can't afford an apartment.

"There's a girl in my class who lives in an abandoned building," the little girl wrote. "She always looks dirty, and we make fun of her. We're not going to make fun of her anymore." There it is! That's why I wrote the book.

Do you visit schools to talk to children?
Not any more. I speak to teachers and librarians—they're the messengers. And my message to them is simple: Help your students take pleasure in reading—it's something they'll have all their lives.

Grassroots

State

MONTANA

For its second legislative contact session this year, the Montana Education Association said no to cars and planes, yes to digital technology.

Instead of traveling, more than 100 MEA political activists gathered at seven hook-up sites and "met" via the state's two-way video conferencing system. Up for discussion: school funding legislation, pensions, and control over school curriculums.

OREGON

Ill winds blow in Salem, where anti-public education lawmakers are now in control. At the top of their agenda: plans to cripple education employees' collective bargaining rights.

Specific proposals would, among other things, establish statewide salaries, make wall-to-wall bargaining illegal, and allow districts to impose their last offer after 60 days.

"We're facing the worst assault since the collective bargaining law was enacted in 1973," says OEA President Bruce Adams.

TENNESSEE

To even out disparities between rich and poor school districts, the state supreme court ruled recently that Tennessee must act to equalize teachers' salaries, which now range from $23,000 to $39,000.

"The court ruled that there could be no equity unless teachers' pay was part of it," explains Tennessee Education Association President Kathy Woodall. The lawsuit was brought by 77 school systems within the state.

TEXAS

Texas State Senator Bill Ratliff admitted that his bill to devolve most education functions from the state to local school districts has "something in it to offend everyone."

For members of the Texas State Teachers Association, the chief offenses are the pilot voucher program and home rule charter provision—the latter "lets voters exempt their districts from most state regulations, which is bad public policy," says TSTA President Richard Kouri.

TSTA also finds unacceptable a pay scale that would provide salary increases to only 35,000 of Texas' 220,000 teachers.

IN STATE CAPITOLS

Vouchers Are Back

Following a year of relative quiet, vouchers are once again on the front burner in more than a dozen state capitols from Colorado to Connecticut.

Hot on the heels of their gains in last November's elections, voucher proponents are moving to pass laws that would funnel public tax money to private schools. A post-election poll revealed that four out of five NEA state affiliates believed their state legislature would be debating voucher legislation this year.

Voucher advocates have learned from their past defeats. In the last 29 years, Americans have voted 19 times against using their tax dollars to support private schools. In the last three voucher elections—in California in 1993, Colorado in 1992, and Oregon in 1990—seven out of ten voters cast their ballots against the measures.

So this year—with the notable exception of California where there's a move to put a rewritten initiative on the ballot—there's little or no talk of putting vouchers to a vote of the people.

Instead, the proponents of this dangerous diversion from the real work of school improvement are turning to state legislatures.

"With state legislatures and governorships in increasingly anti-public school hands, those who wish to destroy the public schools see state capitols as their best bet," explains Sheila Simmons, director of NEA's Center for the Preservation of Public Education.

At presstime, voucher legislation was under consideration in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New Mexico, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin.

NEA affiliates in these states are heavily engaged in lobbying and coalition work to defeat the voucher proposals.

This quick response in defense of all children's right to quality education has already paid off in North Dakota where the Senate Education Committee voted *against* recommending consideration of the voucher bill by the full Senate, reducing the possibility of passage.

In Arizona, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted against a voucher bill targeted at low-income students. At presstime, a second voucher bill was still pending.

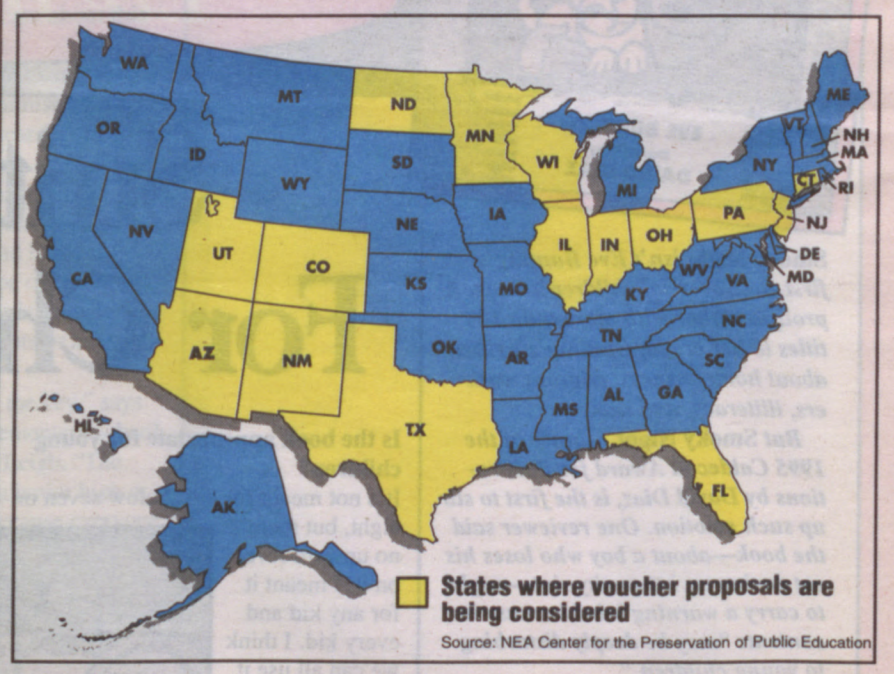
Voucher proponents have become much smarter about how they package their proposals. A number of the state bills being introduced this year are for pilot programs limited to low-income students, often in one or two urban areas. They insist that they're trying to save poor, inner city, largely minority, children from failing and dangerous urban schools.

"This is a clever way to open the door to vouchers," Simmons says, "which will ultimately be extended to all students and provide a tax rebate to the rich while taking money away from schools in inner cities and other low-income areas."

In Minnesota, for example, a bill introduced in the state House of Representatives would provide vouchers worth $3,150 to 1,500 low-income students in Minneapolis and St. Paul to use for tuition at any private school in the metropolitan area.

Voucher proposals in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin are also targeted for either low-income or urban students.

The only existing voucher program—in Milwaukee—serves some 600 low-income students. After three years of operation, the Milwaukee program has not improved achievement of participating students.



States where voucher proposals are being considered

Source: NEA Center for the Preservation of Public Education

IN LOUISIANA

Teachers Win Back Pay

In a big victory for Louisiana educators, the state supreme court recently ruled that teachers are entitled to extended sick leave pay.

That means thousands of dollars in back pay for teachers who were denied the benefit over the last four years—teachers like Jean Dagenhardt.

In November of 1990, Dagenhardt—a junior high reading teacher—was sent to bed with a problem pregnancy. In February, she ran out of accumulated sick leave, and the Terrebonne Parish school board denied her application for extended sick leave pay.

"They started docking me big time," says Dagenhardt, who makes $27,500 with a master's degree and 15 years of experience.

As odd as it may seem to teachers in states where sick leave banks and short- and long-term disability benefits are common, in Louisiana extended sick leave pay is calculated as the difference between a teacher's daily salary and the cost of a substitute. It's been that way for decades.

"To my knowledge," says Louisiana Association of Educators staffer Tom Tate, "Louisiana is the only state in the country with this kind of benefit."

"Louisiana's teachers do not enjoy the salaries or benefits that teachers in other states take for granted," says LAE President Mary Washington. "LAE is committed to making certain that our teachers do receive all that is legally and rightfully theirs."

At presstime, Dagenhardt was waiting for a check for nearly $4,000 in back pay and interest. "Without LAE," she says, "there's no way I could have ever afforded to fight the system."

IN WISCONSIN

Richard Myer

Latchkey No Longer: *Second grader Nick Silloway is happy to stay after school these days, thanks to the volunteer efforts of college students like Kari Werscham.*

Used to be, too many students at Jefferson Elementary School in Stevens Point went home to empty houses at after school. Then members of the Stevens Point Education Association and the University of Wisconsin Student NEA chapter stepped in to help.

Now college students and current and retired teachers donate time to supervise an after-school program. A dozen or so kids get help with their homework, play games, engage in sports, or perfect their artwork.

The Latch Key Program, which includes healthy snacks for the children as well as classroom learning, has been so successful it's become a local institution. The project received the 1994 Community Learning for America's SchoolS (CLASS) Award, given annually by the NEA Student Program.

IN NEW YORK

NEA Welcomes 500 More

More than 500 transportation workers, building and grounds employees, food service workers, and secretaries in Greece recently voted to join NEA and its affiliate, NEA-New York.

The Greece Support Services Association (GSSEA) joins three other NEA affiliates in a large suburban district outside of Rochester.

"There's a new confidence and esprit de corps among our leaders and members now that we have the support of NEA," says GSSEA President Bryan McLaughlin.

"The teamwork and shared decision making that the Greece Teachers Association and the other Greece local Associations so effectively display," adds McLaughlin, "will be welcome as the four groups start to work together."

Although the four locals will have separate contracts, they'll cooperate by sharing information for bargaining, conducting common training, and holding cross-unit work team meetings.

Kevin Higley

Support workers Dave Barth and Debbie St. Andre are two new NEA members. Barth, remodeling a classroom at Hoover Drive School, is a maintenance mechanic; St. Andre is a central office secretary.

Greece is one of about 20 NEA Learning Lab sites where NEA members are working to restructure entire school districts. GSSEA members plan to join in reform work by serving on key committees and helping to make decisions about budgets and programs.

"We have a big stake in helping to create quality schools that will prepare our kids for life in the next century," McLaughlin says. "So we're anxious to pitch in."

STATE BY STATE

How Educated Are We?

How many adults in your state have high school diplomas? At the high end, Alaska takes top honors with close to 90 percent. In last place, Mississippi, where just 64 percent of adults over 25 have high school degrees.

Percentage of population over age 25 with at least a high school diploma

Alabama	67	Montana	81
Alaska	87	Nebraska	82
Arizona	79	Nevada	79
Arkansas	66	New Hampshire	82
California	76	New Jersey	77
Colorado	84	New Mexico	75
Connecticut	79	New York	75
Delaware	78	North Carolina	70
Florida	74	North Dakota	77
Georgia	71	Ohio	76
Hawaii	80	Oklahoma	75
Idaho	80	Oregon	82
Illinois	76	Pennsylvania	75
Indiana	76	Rhode Island	72
Iowa	80	South Carolina	68
Kansas	81	South Dakota	77
Kentucky	65	Tennessee	67
Louisiana	68	Texas	72
Maine	79	Utah	85
Maryland	78	Vermont	81
Massachusetts	80	Virginia	75
Michigan	77	Washington	84
Minnesota	82	West Virginia	66
Mississippi	64	Wisconsin	79
Missouri	74	Wyoming	83

Source: ***Running in Place***, Child Trends, Inc., and the 1990 Census

Local

ARKANSAS

In January, members of the Lee County Education Association conducted eastern Arkansas' first strike since 1927—and won. The dispute—over the illegal diversion of trust fund monies due to teachers and support staff—was settled when the money was restored.

Most striking: community support. Residents of Marianna brought strikers food, spoke out on their behalf, and lobbied four of seven board members to build a pro-Association majority.

COLORADO

The for-profit Edison Project won't be running a charter school in Colorado Springs in the fall. Staffers from Edison—brainchild of Chris Whittle—asked for a year's delay to come up with the necessary funds.

In addition, "some school board members expressed alarm at the extra money Edison expects the district to put in," explains Colorado Springs Education Association President Jan Noble. The board will vote on a contract with Edison later this spring. CSEA opposes the attempt to run schools for profit.

MICHIGAN

Community and Association opposition to privatization has caused Education Alternatives, Inc. to drop its bid to run the Pinckney school district for profit.

Last year, the school board and EAI announced their intentions to pursue privatization. Since then, two citizens opposed to EAI won election to the school board by huge margins, and EAI pulled out.

Not soon enough, unfortunately, for Pinckney bus drivers and custodians, who lost their jobs to other subcontractors.

MARYLAND

Parents struggling to provide their children coats, hats, shoes, or eyeglasses can get a helping hand from the members of the Howard County Education Association. For the past three years, HCEA's "Help a Child" fund has supplied parents with $50 vouchers they can exchange at department stores for clothing and other school essentials. This past year, HCEA raised more than $2,400 and helped 59 families.

SETTING STANDARDS

How OBE Became The Three Most Controversial Letters In Education

When Outcomes-Based Education was proposed in Pennsylvania, the brickbats started to fly. How did an unremarkable education strategy like this set off a brouhaha like that?

Two years ago, the Pennsylvania Board of Education proposed regulations that would allow the use of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) to satisfy new student outcomes.

No longer would high school students have to pass courses and accumulate Carnegie units to earn a diploma. Now they would demonstrate "outcome achievement" in designated areas.

In a matter of months, OBE became the flashpoint for a statewide political firestorm. Far right activists organized dozens of rallies to attack the plan for deemphasizing academics and imposing secular values on children. They even set up a 900 number for rally information.

One anti-OBE leader called the controversy nothing less than "a battle between secular humanists and persons who believe in Judeo-Christian values."

Ultimately, the Pennsylvania education reform effort survived—although in modified form. But Pennsylvania is neither the first nor the last place where OBE has been under siege: School boards have dropped OBE altogether in Littleton, Colorado; Rosemount, Minnesota; and Montgomery, Texas. It's under attack now in Verona, Wisconsin.

Nor are school districts and state departments of education the only entities taking hits for OBE. In Pennsylvania, those opposed to OBE also attacked the Pennsylvania State Education Association and the NEA—even though neither organization has ever endorsed OBE. PSEA did, however, support statewide reform efforts.

What happened in Pennsylvania could happen in your state or district. You could be faced with an ugly fight, and your Association could get some of the blame.

What is it about OBE that makes it so easy to hate?

"OBE's not really the issue," says Sheila Simmons, director of the NEA Center for Preservation of Public Education. "What we're talking about here is the public response to educational innovation.

"In one recent public opinion survey," Simmons continues, "more than 80 percent of parents and the public indicated they believe in setting clear goals and designing curriculum that enables students to reach them—which is the theory of OBE."

But the public, Simmons adds, thinks the OBE goals are fuzzy, and educators haven't been good at explaining them.

"The public cares about safety, order,

Citizenship

All students analyze the economic concepts of scarcity, consumption, production, opportunity costs, and interdependence as they relate to contemporary political, social, and individual consumer decisions.

Outcome proposed by state board of education.

All students explain basic economic concepts and the development and operation of economic systems in the United States and other nations, and make informed decisions about economic issues.

Outcome approved by state legislature.

Self Worth

All students act through a desire to succeed rather than a fear of failure while recognizing that failure is a part of everyone's experience.

Outcome proposed by state board of education.

Self-worth section deleted from final regulations.

Outcome approved by state legislature.

Fanning the Flames

The firestorm of controversy OBE created in Pennsyvlania was fanned by red-hot rhetoric from the the right. A sampling:

➤ ***"Organized Satanism had its hand in the creation of Outcome Based Education, through the United Nations-sponsored Lucis Trust, a.k.a. Lucifer Trust."***

—*The Federalist* (a monthly publication)

➤ ***"Outcomes-based education means 'let's wait until everything is all said and done and let's just proclaim everybody equal.' If somebody thinks two plus two equals five, that's fine . . . .***

"[The NEA is] trying to eliminate any standards whatsoever because what that does is ensure that no teacher will be perceived as a bad teacher. They're trying to protect their . . . . They're just union thugs here and their teachers are union members."

—Rush Limbaugh
The Rush Limbaugh Show

➤ ***"You get state outcomes that say things like children will learn to reason better and cope with stress—without ever dealing with what they will learn in math, science, and history."***

—Jeanne Allen, Center for Education Reform
(formerly with the Heritage Foundation)

➤ ***"The state is now saying it will mandate to individual children what they must know, do, and be like."***

—Nancy Staible, Pennsylvania chapter,
Citizens for Excellence in Education (CEE)

SETTING STANDARDS

and the basics, in that order, and until those things are taken care of, they don't want to hear about OBE or cooperative learning or any other reform," Simmons explains.

There's more than a little irony in the debate over OBE "fuzziness," because OBE comes out of a behavioral science tradition half a century old: State what you want students to be able to do in measurable terms, then design curriculum that lets them learn how to do it.

Competency-based instruction, a close cousin of OBE, has been popular with vocational educators—including those in Pennsylvania—for years because it allows instructors to specify precisely what they want students to be able to do. "Given so many two-by-fours," for example, "students will be able to frame the wall of a house."

Fuzziness entered the picture when OBE became a strategy for school reform. One rationale for such a link is Colorado professor William Spady's notion of "transformational OBE," which argues that OBE should change schools, not just make traditional schools run better.

Looking back, notes Pennsylvania State Education Association President Annette Palutis, "It would have been better if all of us in education had been prepared for the attacks on education before they were made."

But when reformers began to write end-of-school outcomes—as opposed to end-of-unit or end-of-course outcomes—their language necessarily became a bit vague.

Consider this Pennsylvania math outcome:

All students formulate and solve problems and communicate the mathematical processes used and the reasons for using them.

The planners who wrote this no doubt know what they meant, but the average parent wants to know, "What are we talking about, calculus or Algebra I?"

Also, as many observers have noted, vagueness lets people project their own meanings onto words. The following outcome, proposed in 1993 and since revised, helped fuel the OBE firestorm in Pennsylvania. Guess why.

All students apply knowledge, demonstrate skills, and examine attitudes in choosing behaviors that promote healthy life styles.

In the final version of OBE outcomes, approved by the Pennsylvania legislature, the term "life styles" does not appear.

Still, it's hard to imagine fuzziness by itself setting off the Pennsylvania conflagration. There had to be other incendiary factors.

Pennsylvania's State Education Association President Annette Palutis points to three factors.

"One was a woman named Peg Luksik, who had run for governor in 1990 on an anti-abortion platform. Two years ago, she was looking for a new issue for the 1994 race," Palutis explains. "She picked OBE."

At the same time, the Pennsylvania chapter of CEE (Citizens for Excellence in Education), an organization of public education critics, worked closely with Luksik.

Finally, there was an information void. The state department of education wasn't prepared for controversy. Its officials had no way to get information out to answer the charges against OBE.

Eventually, common sense prevailed in the Pennsylvania legislature, which approved the revised outcomes.

"But it would have been better if all of us in public education had been ready to answer the attacks before they were made," Palutis says. (See box, "Is There an OBE in Your Future?")

"There's already been a cost and it's political," Palutis notes. "A Republican legislator told me this year that there's still a backlash from the OBE fight among Republicans.

"The episode gave them a bad feeling about the public schools that hasn't gone away," Palutis explains. "That reaction could ultimately be harmful to our students."

The backlash can also hurt education reform. Observes NEA's Sheila Simmons: "The highly ideological controversy that erupted in Pennsylvania can discourage citizens—including educators—from setting out a vision of what American education should be. That's something we all need to do."

—Nancy R. Needham

Peg Luksik led the attack on outcomes-based education in Pennsylvania. She used OBE as a campaign issue in her unsuccessful gubernatorial bid. Her campaign against OBE has also carried over into Wisconsin.

Appreciating and Understanding Others

All students demonstrate the ability to interact with others on the basis of their individual merits and without discrimination because of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, lifestyle, or socioeconomic status.

Outcome proposed by state board of education.

Appreciating and understanding others section deleted from final regulations.

Outcome approved by state legislature.

Is There an OBE in Your Future?

Is your state or district proposing OBE—or some other potentially controversial innovation? PSEA leaders suggest you consider the following.

- Make sure the education department or board that's considering adopting OBE-type outcomes examines these outcomes for unnecessary vagueness, jargon, or "trigger words" (like "life styles")—and rewords to achieve greater consensus.
- Encourage state officials to make sure that assessment methods, especially for sensitive affective outcomes, in such areas as multiculturalism and health, for example, are sensible and defensible.
- Create a coalition with other groups—the state department of education, parent groups, the business community—before announcing new initiatives. Identify point people from each group and prepare them to respond in depth to questions or criticisms that may be raised.
- Talk to colleagues in states where OBE may have surfaced. You can do this easily if you have NEA Online. Keyword: NEA Teaching, then click the Teaching & Learning Message Board icon. Scroll the topic list until you reach Outcomes-Based Education.

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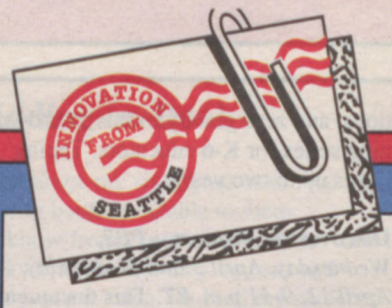

Innovation

How NEA members are changing the way schools work

Ellen Banner

When asked how to spend $175,000, language arts teacher Joe James cast his vote for new computer software and additional classes for students.

A Revolution in Progress

The Seattle school system is being turned on its head as central office dollars and decisions are willingly handed over to local school personnel and parents.

At West Seattle High School, the computer lab has a full-time technician and new software to boot. The part-time nurse is now full-time, there's an additional counselor, and the art room finally has a sink.

"We got $175,000," says Joe James, a language arts teacher at West Seattle High. "It's the first time we've been asked what to do with that big a chunk of money. They said to us, 'You're the people working with kids. You know the best uses of these funds.'"

At Hawthorne Elementary in Rainier Valley, school personnel and parents decided to use new funds to reduce class size from 32 to 25, and expand kindergarten from half- to full-day.

What's new at Seattle's 100 public schools? Money and the power to spend it.

If you're thinking the money came from a grant or a tax increase or a lottery ticket, think again.

The windfall flows directly from a new partnership between the Seattle Education Association (SEA) and school superintendent Bill Kendrick. After years of confrontational bargaining, the two parties decided to abandon old roles.

"The old adversarial ways hadn't strengthened the ability of the union or management to deal with the increasing needs of kids," says SEA Executive Director Roger Erskine, who helped engineer the agreement.

"We said we're going to commit to make sure kids get the best education possible," adds Erskine. "That's more important than these skirmishes."

To that end, the two sides decided the best way to boost student achievement was to direct more resources to schools and let staffs and community representatives decide how to spend the money.

Their first decision: eliminate 80 central office positions and send the $5 million saved directly to schools.

"We're moving from a school system to a system of schools," says SEA's Erskine. "We're not doing what the normal restructuring has done. We've blown some things up and thrown some things out."

One of the first things to get blown up was the bureaucracy in the school district's central administration offices. A partnership team of parents, teachers, support personnel, central administration staff, and community representatives made recommendations to cut deputy superintendent and area supervisor positions.

By spring of 1994, some $5 million began flowing from the central administration to the city's 100 schools.

Some schools used the money to hire new teachers, counselors, and paraprofessionals. Others used their funds to create drug, alcohol, or family support programs.

Seattle schools are getting more than just money from the school district. According to superintendent Kendrick, they're also getting better service. The elimination of area supervisors and deputy superintendents means Seattle's 100 principals now report directly to Kendrick.

"I now sit one on one with every principal to evaluate what's going on in each school building," he says.

"Used to be, the central office formula was direct, control, and dictate," Kendrick adds. "Now, the office exists to assist, enable, and help support each school."

Teachers couldn't agree more.

"We have more input now than ever before," says Hajara Rahim, a lead teacher at Hawthorne Elementary School. "They've asked the teachers to critique a new curriculum in math and language arts. It's different from before when they would say, 'Here, this is what it is. Just do it!'"

Under the new partnership, central office staff no longer write curriculum for each school. Teachers do.

"We eliminated all curriculum specialists from central administration and put in place instructional specialists," Erskine says. "Each is a teacher who helps other teachers put curriculum in place."

This kind of decision-making at the school level is having a noticeable effect on students, according to West Seattle High's Joe James.

"We voted to use $33,000 of our money to implement a four-period school day," says James. "That's made an incredible difference to our students. We have more time with each class. We teach a lot better and the students are getting to know us a lot better."

This new "system of schools" is affecting the larger community as well. Area businesses have jumped on the bandwagon, donating more resources and even staff to Seattle schools.

In fact, voters just approved a $330 million school construction measure—which they'd rejected four times in the past two years.

"Business and community forces joined hands once they saw us working together," says Erskine. "They didn't have to choose sides anymore."

The partnership team is now at work on further changes in how the school superintendent's office works with each school.

"Next we're looking at improved approaches to hiring, assignments, and enrollment," Kendrick says. "We'll look at how to be more effective and deliver services better."

Those changes will take effect in September 1995.

—Karen Gutloff

E-mail NEAPLIB3@AOL.COM

Person-to-Person Call

NEA's Teacher-to-Teacher book series features candid, practical advice from classroom teachers about their efforts in school restructuring.

Each NEA Teacher-to-Teacher book features stories written by NEA members who have found successful strategies for moving beyond traditional education practices.

Editor Karen Gutloff is seeking authors for books on the following topics:

- ➤ parental involvement (April 24)
- ➤ integrated thematic teaching (April 24)
- ➤ multiple intelligences (May 19), and
- ➤ the role of education support personnel in school restructuring (May 19).

Manuscripts are due by the dates specified above. To receive the writing guidelines, contact Gutloff at the NEA Professional Library, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, call 202/822-7248, or e-mail NEAPLIB3@AOL.COM.

RESOURCES

TV Tips

My Antonia—*USA, Sunday, April 2, 8 p.m. ET, repeating Saturday, April 8 at 3 p.m. ET, commercial-free airings for Cable in the Classroom, Thursday, April 20, 3-5 a.m. ET; Friday, April 21, 3-5 a.m. ET.* This dramatization of a Willa Cather classic follows the story of a young man in Nebraska farm country whose life is changed by his relationship with a young immigrant woman.

National Geographic Explorer: Norman Vaughn—*TBS, Sunday, April 2, 9 p.m. ET.* This series follows 88-year-old veteran climber Norman Vaughn as he returns to the Antarctic terrain he explored with Admiral Byrd in 1928 and attempts to climb the mountain named after him.

TLC Elementary School: Exploring Space—*The Learning Channel, Tuesday, April 4, 4-5 a.m. ET.* Learn about the space shuttle, lunar filling stations, and zero gravity in this award-winning series for K-6 educators. Taping rights up to two years.

Discovering Women—*PBS, Wednesday, April 5 and Wednesday, April 12, 9-11 p.m. ET.* This documentary profiles four remarkable women scientists. This program is part of *S.O.S.: Seek Out Science*, a national educational outreach campaign for middle school and junior high school students. A free activity guide is available in English or Spanish, write to: Seek Out Science, Educational Print and Outreach, 125 Western Ave., Boston, MA 02134.

Assignment Discovery: Haiku—*The Discovery Channel, Thursday, April 13, 9 a.m. ET.* This episode of Assignment Discovery features the three-line, 17-syllable poem that's been a literary form of expression in Japan for over 300 years.

500 Nations—*CBS, Thursday and Friday, April 20-21, check local listings for times.* This special miniseries follows the epic struggles of Indian nations throughout North America. For information about a soon-to-be-available study guide on this series, contact CBS Educational & Community Services, 51 W. 52nd St., New York, NY 10019.

World of Audubon: The Man Who Loves Bears—*TBS, Sunday, April 23, 10 p.m. ET.* A look at how bears across North America are faring through the lens of scientist Tim Treadwell.

No Time to Be a Child—*PBS, Friday, April 28, 9 p.m. ET.* This four-hour program focuses on children who must rely on strong coping mechanisms and social support systems to overcome the violent circumstances of their lives.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a computerized clearinghouse for children's radio and television programming in Washington, D.C.

Ahead on *Teacher TV*

Looking for some proven classroom strategies? Then tune in to *Teacher TV*, the award-winning weekly magazine-style program coproduced by NEA and The Learning Channel. *Teacher TV* airs Sundays at 12:30 p.m. ET. Here's a list of topics set for upcoming episodes:

April 2: The Inclusion Dilemma
April 9: Effective Discipline Strategies
April 16: Integrating Technology
April 30: Dealing With Disasters
May 7: Teaching Teachers

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IDEA EXCHANGE

Bidding on Books

I encourage my sixth graders to read by making books available to them.

I know from experience that kids have books at home that they've read and have just put aside. So I tell my students that I'll buy their used books at the rate of $1 per paperback.

These books then go into my classroom "bookstore," where students can buy them for the low, low price of $2 each.

Before you think I'm a profiteer, the dollars in these transactions aren't real. They're Mr. Beck's Book Bucks, printed on my home computer. And I hand them out on other occasions, too—like when a kid turns in good work, helps with a classroom service project, or reads a book for class work.

I put aside some of the best books for auction. On auction day, the kids bid with their Book Bucks. One popular

book recently went for $47 Book Bucks, and the class reacted like the successful bidder had bought a Rembrandt!

Donald Beck
Fenton Middle School
Fenton, Michigan

Sticker Stock

I give my eighth graders an extra push to do their best by offering them rewards for good grades.

An *A* or a *B* on a homework assignment, or a *B+* or better on a test or project, rates a small sticker on the returned page.

For 10 stickers, a student may choose one of my jazzy pencils, 15 stickers earn one of my colored ink pens, 20 stickers earn a homework-free night. Each student has a 4" x 6" index card to keep a record of the stickers won.

The kids sometimes snicker when I introduce this system to them, but they inevitably buy into it and soon count up their stickers each time papers are returned.

Susan Sarabasha
Boynton Middle School
Ithaca, New York

Celebrity Museum

My seventh grade English students enjoy learning how to write business letters properly when we use a "celebrity museum" motif.

Each student writes to a local or national celebrity. The kids use almanacs, phone books, and *TV Guides* to find network addresses.

Each letter must contain three paragraphs. First, the writer explains why the recipient was chosen. Second, the writer tells something about himself or herself. And third, the writer requests an inexpensive item for the school's "celebrity museum."

That item could be a photo, an autograph, a guitar pick—anything personal the celebrity chooses to donate.

When the return mail arrives, items are displayed in a case or on a bulletin board during parent-teacher conference time.

Afterward, the students are allowed to—and pleased to— take them home.

Kathy Denor
Washington School
Oconto, Wisconsin

Send Your Ideas

Have any tips for this column? Pass them along in one of five ways:

➤By mail to Idea Exchange, *NEA Today,* 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

➤By phone, 202/822-7201.

➤By fax, 202/822-7206.

➤By NEA Online, keyword *NEA Today.*

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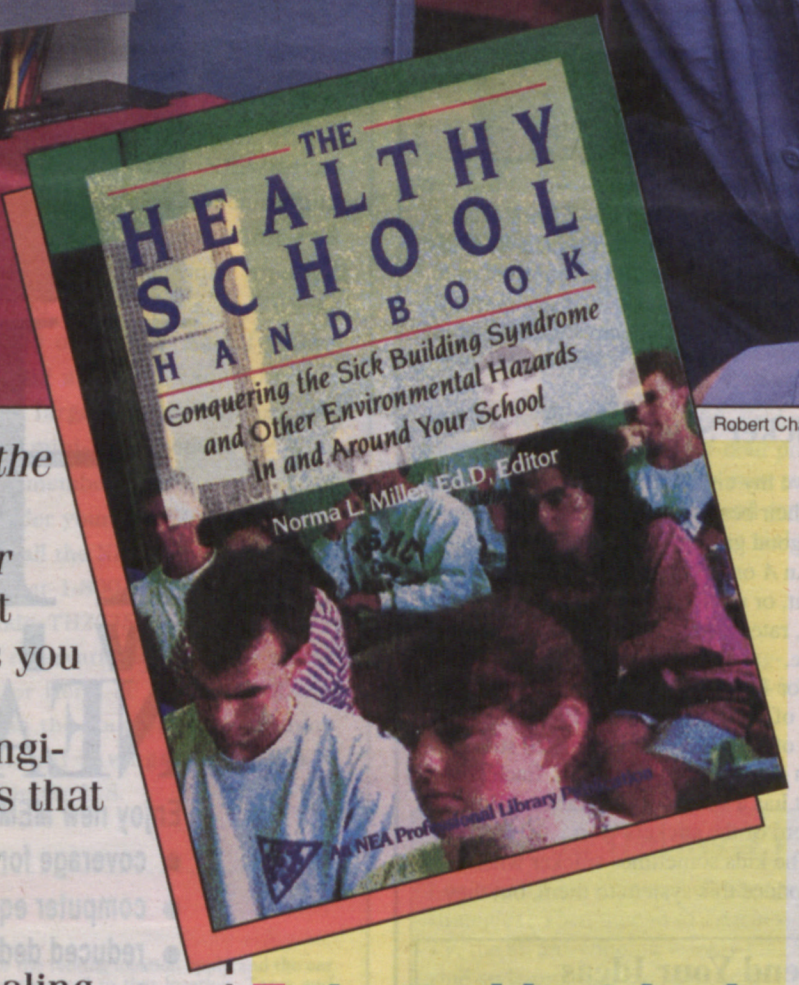
"What you don't know about sick school building syndrome can *really* hurt you!"

—Michael Graves, custodian at Stevenson Elementary School, Southfield, MI

What are the effects of a sick school building on learning?

Why are children more susceptible than adults?

What are the safe alternatives to the hazardous chemicals found in schools?



Robert Chase

The Healthy School Handbook: Conquering the Sick Building Syndrome and Other Environmental Hazards In and Around Your School is a timely and comprehensive guide that will answer these and the many other questions you have about how your school can make you sick. Leading environmental scientists, physicians, engineers, and educators have prepared 23 chapters that address the concerns of teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, and students.

Every chapter offers practical advice for dealing economically and non-toxically with such problems as pest control, floor coverings, toxic cleaning materials, and poor lighting. There's also information on complying with federal and state regulations regarding indoor air quality, cafeteria food, chemical emissions, and scores of other environmental issues that affect every education support staffer, teacher, and student.

The Healthy School HandBook
May 1995, 400pp.

paperback edition (stock # 1863-X-20-U8)
Regular Price: $21.95
Special Member's Price: $16.95
NOTE: Special price expires May 15,1995.

hardcover edition (stock # 1866-4-00-U8)
Price: $45.95

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How up-to-date is your professional bookshelf?

Assessment

NEW!

Portfolios: Assessing Learning in the Primary Grades
Marianne Lucas Lescher
A classroom teacher gives you her unique perspective on *what research says to the teacher* about portfolio assessment. Ms Lescher blends an overview of the literature with her own action research findings and suggests strategies for selecting portfolio components, offers tips on innovative uses, and discusses the steps to take if you want to begin using student portfolios. 40pp. 1995. (1094-9-00-U8) *Price: $3.95*

NEW!

Assessing Learning in the Classroom
A Report from NEA's National Center for Innovation
This is an overview of classroom assessment — assessment to inform teaching and improve learning — not to sort students and justify grades. It gives you principles of effective assessment, key questions in planning, the framework of different approaches and methods, and evaluation and communication methods. Written by experts, you'll find this a readable guide to critical issue of fairly assessing students in the classroom. 32pp. 1995. (1868-0-10-U8)
Regular price: $6.95
Special Member's Price: $4.95

Alternative Assessment
Teacher TV on VHS, Episode #11
This video looks at: using computer technology to allow students to document their own accomplishments; students judging one another's science fair projects; and students demonstrating achievements and setting goals at regular parent-teacher-student conferences. 22 min. (7760-1-00-U8) *Price: $15.95*

COMING SOON
Portfolio Practices
by Harvard University's Project Zero

NEW!

The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)
by Karen A. Bosch and Katharine C. Kersey
"My copy is thoroughly dog-eared!" says Melissa Earnest, a first-year social studies teacher. Along with a day-by-day preparation schedule, you'll find 1,001 hints and ideas on, classroom arrangement, discipline/reward strategies, parent communication openers, and examples and reproducibles. All of these ideas come from the experience of your colleagues who are willing to share their hard-earned wisdom. 144pp. 1994. (1862-1-00-U8) *Price: $18.95*

Discipline

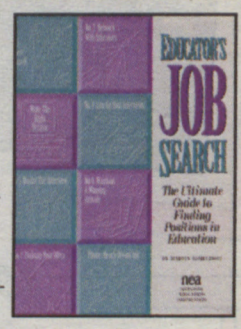
NEW!

Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms
Merrill Harmin
This is the premiere title in the Inspired Classroom Series. These practical strategies will expand your classroom management skills and help inspire student self-discipline through personal responsibility. 128pp. 1995. (2950-X-00-U8) *Price: $12.95*

Innovative Discipline
NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books
If you are interested in developing innovative, child-centered, strategies that foster self-control and a positive learning environment, don't miss these K-12 approaches: TQM (total quality management) comes to school, peer mediation, "kids court, heart-to-heart discussion groups, strategies for developing self-discipline and self-esteem. 96pp. 1994. (2904-6-00-U8) *Price: $9.95*

Effective Discipline Strategies
Teacher TV on VHS, Episode #29
Here are some new techniques in the ongoing challenge for effective discipline: a school staff and parents have developed an environment fostering self-discipline; and some experienced educators give some concrete strategies for handling problems ranging from the verbally abusive student to the apathetic one. 22 min. (7778-4-00-U8) *Price: $15.95*

Educator's Job Search: The Ultimate Guide to Finding Positions in Education
Martin Kimeldorf
This book is not a job listing. All the interesting jobs are not posted; many are "created" by innovative job seekers. Mr. Kimeldorf helps you develop strategies for alternative approaches in simple, direct suggestions. The book includes exercises on how to: identify and promote your job strengths, write an impressive resume, master job interviews, and how to evaluate all the job offers you'll get. 88pp. 1993. (1860-5-10-U8)
Price: $15.95
Special Member's Price: $11.96



Inclusion

NEW!

Creating Schools for All Our Students: What 12 Schools Have to Say
An inside look at how 12 schools from different communities are making the inclusive concept work. Captured in these pages are the real-life experiences of school-based teams solving the issues: inclusive schools and how they begin, a sense of community, collaboration, collegiality, and partnership, improved learning through innovative instruction, leadership in an inclusive school, how we can all work together to create more inclusive schools. 76pp. 1994. (1865-6-00-U8)
Regular Price: $16.95
Special Member's Price: $13.00

Teaching the Academically Diverse Classroom
Teacher TV on VHS, Episode #22
Four schools share approaches for working with diverse student populations. One school makes moderately and severely disabled students an integral part of the school community, while another analyses the work and learning styles of its students and staff to best match and accommodate their needs. 22 min. (7771-7-00-U8)
Price: $15.95

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People

Planting More Than Seeds

Everything's about to come up daffodils in Danbury, New Hampshire, where third grade teacher **Mary Jane Ogmundson** uses the spring flowers to teach her students subjects ranging from math to civic pride.

The kids practice writing skills in letters to companies asking for bulbs and in thank-you notes to those—from Holland and all over the United States—who donate.

They study geography in tracing the origins of the bulbs, science and math in planting the over 1,000 bulbs a year, then add music and agriculture lessons in the mix.

Values, Ogmundson explains, are part of the curriculum, too. "I want them to take pride in their work, discover community spirit, and learn respect for the earth."

And Ogmundson wants her students to understand that patience is a virtue—the bulbs planted in the fall won't bloom until spring.

"Some things in life," she says, "are worth waiting for."

Daydream Believer

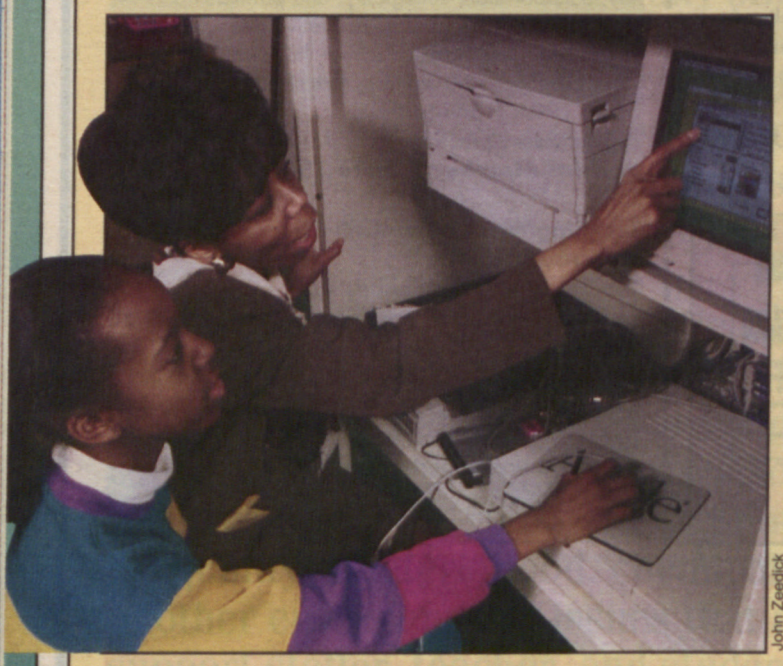
Alda Hanna has $25,000 to spend any way she wants. That's the money she was awarded recently as a recipient of a National Educator Award, presented by the Milken Family Foundation.

Asked about the award, Hanna shifts the subject, preferring to talk about her fifth grade students at Steele Elementary School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

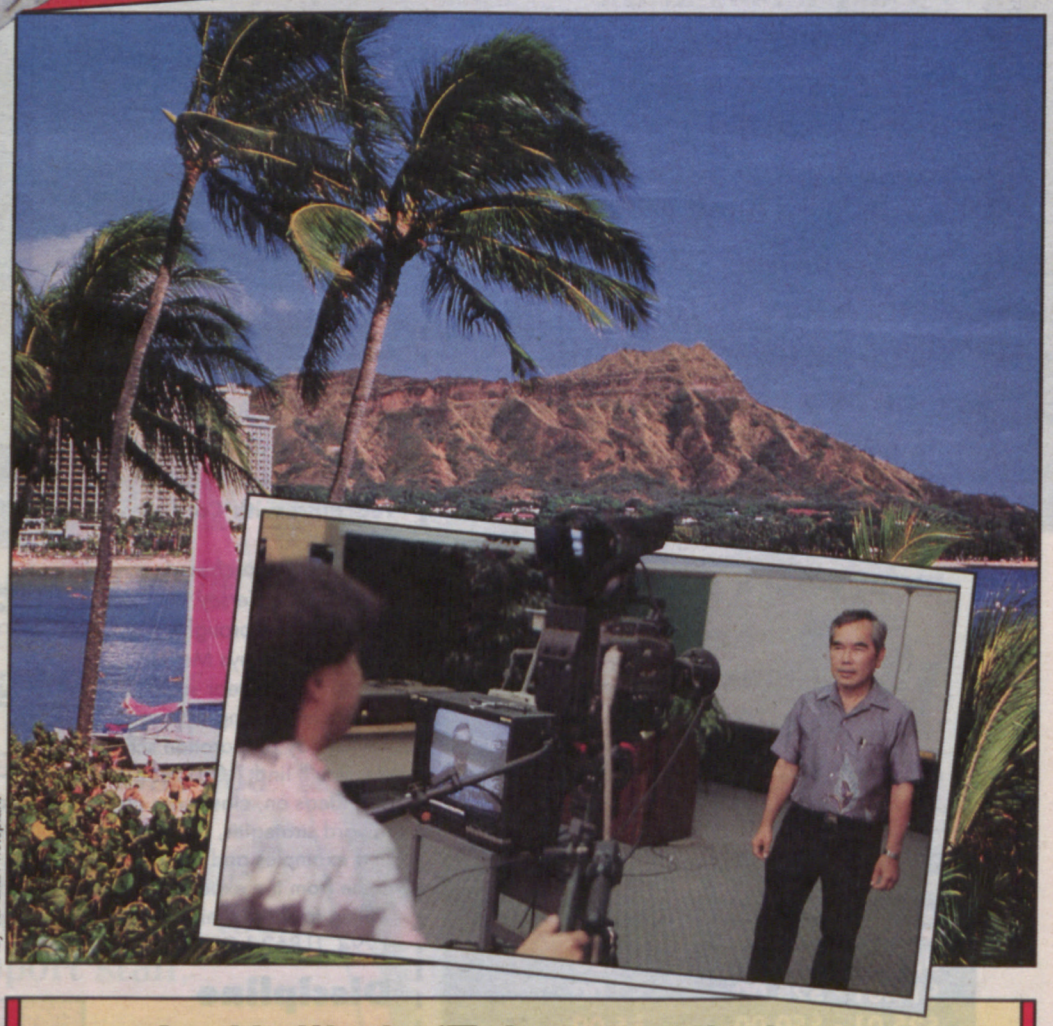
"I believe in my students," says Hanna. "I believe they can become scientists or whatever else they want to be, but they need a good education to tap into their potential."

Hanna's theme-based, hands-on approach gets students excited about learning, and she's added special touches.

Two years ago, she convinced the Great Lakes Telecommunications Collaborative to donate $15,000 worth of high-tech equipment, including a satellite dish that brings in programs from around the world. And then there are the personal touches, such as giving students her home phone number for those times when they need just a little extra help on an assignment.



John Zeedick



Ray Tanaka/Photoplant

An Unlikely 'Televangelist'

Koki Tamashiro uses TV to propagate mathematics. At 8:10 every weekday morning, from a studio at Maui High School, Tamashiro fires up his Power Mac and teleteaches Advanced Placement calculus via cable TV to 24 students at small high schools throughout Hawaii.

"Without distance learning, the schools wouldn't be able to offer AP calculus, and their students wouldn't have 'equality of opportunity to learn,'" Tamashiro explains.

The veteran teacher (and Milken Family Foundation award winner) has also become an underground math guru for adults. Some take the "public" calculus quiz he puts up on the screen on Fridays while his students are working on their own weekly quiz—faxed to them on site. Others, such as the man who was preparing for a real estate test, make use of Tamashiro's weekly Homework Hotline program on cable.

But Tamashiro's main target is kids, and his program's working: Student interest in calculus has increased to the point that two schools have dropped out to offer AP calculus on their own.

Photographs by Christina Freitag

Rustic Learning

On the edge of 60 acres of wooded land in New Albany, Indiana stands Cedar House—a federally funded alternative school for a dozen or so emotionally handicapped students who aren't succeeding in regular schools.

"All their lives, these kids have been told they can't," says **Mary Lou Diehl,** the school's founder and only teacher. "Now they have every opportunity to turn themselves around—even earn their diploma. Cedar House is a chance for them."

The school—housed in an abandoned cabin Diehl (politely and properly) seized—provides kids with the opportunity for hands-on learning.

"Students get to do things here," Diehl explains. "The outdoors is their laboratory where they apply math and science to reality."

After "classes" at Cedar House, students go to another federally funded program, Employment Priorities, where they are placed in educational extension programs or paid or unpaid jobs, Diehl explains.

The payoff: Diehl overheard one student remark that he hadn't been in school for more than three days in a row since third grade. "He's been here every day since November," she says, adding, "nothing is impossible."

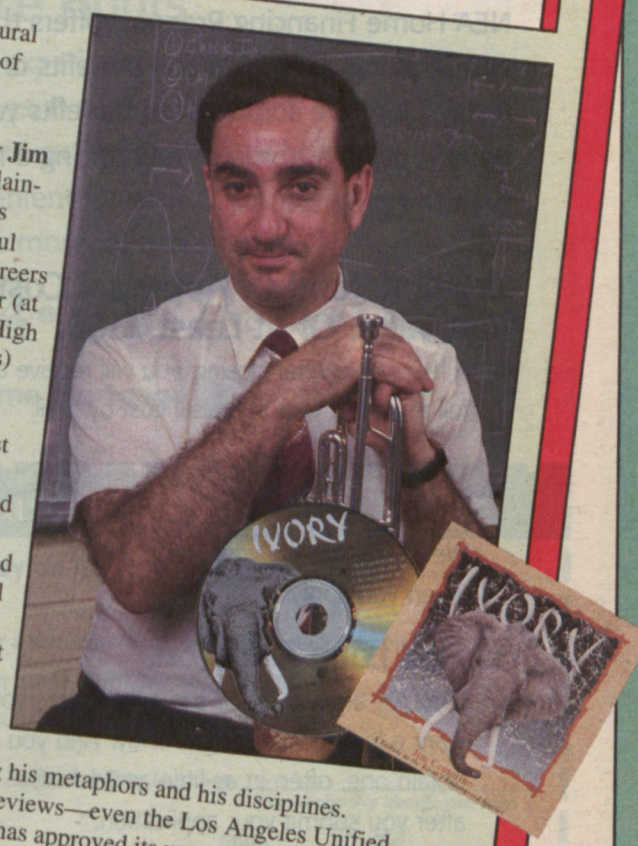
Arts, Sciences, and Sound

"Music is an aural representation of space."

So says Los Angeles teacher **Jim Centorino,** explaining how it is he's been so successful combining his careers as physics teacher (at El Camino Real High in Woodland Hills) and professional musician.

Centorino's latest musical effort—a CD/audio tape called *Ivory*—mixes the sounds of endangered animals with original music.

"I'm trying to paint a picture of each animal in its natural habitat," Centorino says, purposely mixing his metaphors and his disciplines.



Ivory's gotten rave reviews—even the Los Angeles Unified School District library has approved its use as an education tool.

You can purchase Ivory *at Nature stores or order it from World Disc Productions, 800/228-5711. A portion of the proceeds will go to organizations concerned with the protection and care of endangered species.*

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- **Competitive Interest Rates.**
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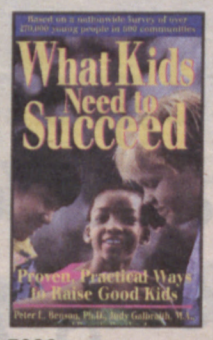

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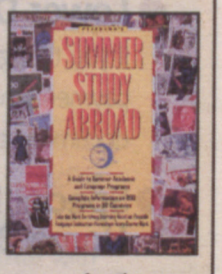
Law of the Student Press. Student Press Law Center. High school student newspaper advisers: know your rights. Covered in this easy-to-read book—copyright laws, censorship, obscenity laws, the electronic media, privacy laws, and the underground press. Pages have side notes and chapters are summarized. $15 includes s&h. Contact the Student Press Law Center, 1101 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1910, Arlington, VA 22209, 202/466-5242. E-mail requests: splc@capaccess.org.

SAFE SCHOOLS

Legal Issues Surrounding Safe Schools. Reed Day. The author addresses legal issues in maintaining safe schools including the right to a safe school, search and seizure, student discipline, regulation of specific conduct, gangs, and drugs. Includes suggested policy statements on violence, weapons, and metal detectors. $29.95 plus $3 s&h. Contact the National Organization on Legal Problems of Education, 3601 S.W. 29th St., Suite 223, Topeka, KS 66614-2047, 913/273-3550.

SUMMER STUDY

Peterson's Summer Study Abroad: A Guide to Summer Academic and Language Programs. Students can select from 800 summer programs in place in 80 countries—from Argentina to Zimbabwe—by using this simple guide. Includes easy-to-find information about cost, living arrangements, academic focus, faculty, and more. $18.95 plus $5.75 s&h. Contact Peterson's Customer Service, P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, NJ 08543-2123, 800/338-3282.



DATA BANK

Who's the Biggest of Them All?

In population, it's still California, but Texas has taken over the second spot, edging out New York by just 200,000 people. Here's the top five and bottom five.

TOP FIVE

California
31,400,000

Texas
18,400,000

New York
18,200,000

Florida
14,000,000

Pennsylvania
12,000,000

BOTTOM FIVE

Delaware
706,000

North Dakota
638,000

Alaska
606,000

Vermont
580,000

Wyoming
478,000

Source: Census Bureau

Community Watch

What do citizens think are the main problems facing their schools? A poll of 1,200 adults revealed these findings:

- Drug use and violence in schools: 72%
- Low academic standards and expectations: 61%
- Not enough emphasis on basics: 60%
- Not getting enough money to do the job: 58%
- Not enough math, science, and computers: 52%
- Not enough emphasis on good work habits, such as being on time to class and completing assignments: 52%
- Overcrowded classes: 50%
- Failure to teach religious values: 47%
- Unclear expectations of what students need to learn: 47%
- Too many teachers who are more interested in being popular than requiring respect and discipline: 41%

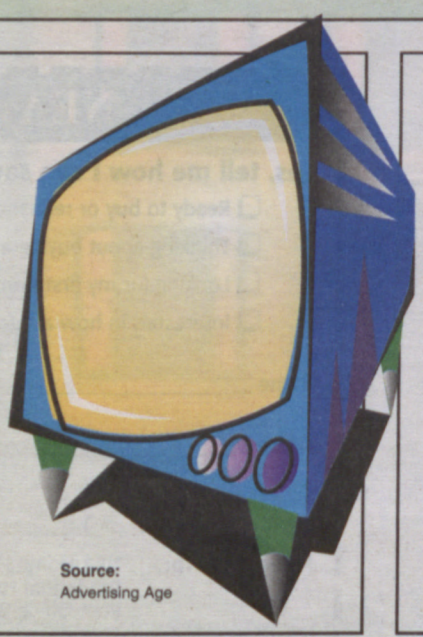
Source: Public Agenda

Paying for Air

A 30-second commercial shown on network TV during prime time cost advertisers these amounts in September:

Seinfeld (NBC)	$390
Home Improvements (ABC)	$350
Roseanne (ABC)	$310
Murphy Brown (CBS)	$290
Monday Night Football (ABC)	$285
Grace Under Fire (ABC)	$270
Madman of the People (NBC)	$250
Frasier (NBC)	$230
Love and War (CBS)	$225
60 Minutes (CBS)	$225
Northern Exposure (CBS)	$225
Ellen (ABC)	$225

In thousands of dollars



Source: Advertising Age

Look Who's Talking, Too

Parents and their eighth graders are talking more about school life. Below are the percentages of eighth graders who say their parents are involved in these specific ways:

Selecting courses	85
School activities	91
Class studies	88
Checking homework	90
Limiting TV viewing	65
Limiting going out with friends	89
Talking with teacher/counselor	60
Visiting classes	29

Overall the study shows female students are more likely to report that their parents talked to them about school life than male students.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988*

LEGAL TIMES

Can a school district require student athletes to submit to random drug tests in order to compete in interscholastic sports?

Can a student force a university to pay for the publication of a Christian magazine if the university finances nonreligious student publications?

Does Congress have the authority to ban guns on school grounds?

DRUGS SPORTS GUNS

Legal eagles are paying close attention as the nation's highest court takes on three cases critical to the future of public education.

Vernonia School District. 47J v. Acton

James Acton just wants to play football.

But the Oregon seventh grader's been banned from all sports activities because his parents refuse to sign a consent form allowing him to be tested at random for drugs and alcohol.

Can a school district do that? The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals said "no," but the Supreme Court's going to take a second look.

At the trial, Vernonia School District officials claimed that the testing program was necessary to combat a drug "epidemic" among students that began in the late 1980s.

They testified that a "three-fold increase in classroom disruptions and disciplinary reports" was an outright "rebellion" of students "being fueled by alcohol and drug abuse."

Several teachers testified "how appalled and helpless they felt as students increasingly expressed their attraction to, and vocal defense of, the use of drugs." There was also evidence that drug use caused injuries to student athletes while participating in sports.

To combat this "epidemic," the school district adopted a program requiring all middle and high school student athletes to be tested for amphetamines, cocaine, marijuana, and alcohol at the beginning of the athletic season and requiring random testing of 10 percent of the athletes during the season.

Acton and his parents sued, but a federal district court upheld the testing program. Applying a "balancing test," the court ruled that the school district's interest in ensuring "student safety in athletic programs and maintaining discipline in the classrooms" outweighed the students' privacy interests under the Fourth Amendment.

Last year, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed.

Citing two Supreme Court drug testing cases, the court said that random and "suspicionless" drug testing is constitutional only when the person tested is involved in a "safety-sensitive" activity, such as driving a bus, monitoring a nuclear reactor, or piloting an airplane.

Student athletes, the court said, don't engage in these kinds of activities.

And it doesn't matter that the students are minors. Quoting from an earlier Supreme Court case, the court emphasized that "students do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate," and they are entitled to have their right to privacy respected.

While "having uncaring, disrespectful, drug-impaired children in our schools is tragic," the court concluded, that tragedy "is not the type of potential disaster" to justify "suspicionless testing."

If school officials are concerned about student drug use, the court said, they should consider testing based on "individualized" suspicion of drug use.

Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of UVA

Ronald Rosenberger, a student at the University of Virginia (UVA), wants UVA to subsidize a Christian magazine he launched in 1990. The university said no, its policy expressly prohibits funding of "religious activities."

So Rosenberger sued, claiming to be the victim of discrimination—religious discrimination—and the Supreme Court's going to settle the dispute.

Like most higher ed institutions, UVA funds a number of student publications through student activities fees.

In September 1990, Rosenberger and several other students launched *Wide Awake,* a proselytizing Christian magazine distributed free on campus. The students then asked the university for a $5,800 subsidy to cover their costs.

When UVA refused, the students filed suit in federal court.

They claimed that UVA's refusal to pay for their Christian publication was unconstitutional because it discriminated against religious speech in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments. Since UVA funds nonreligious student publications, the students said, it's illegal discrimination for UVA to refuse to fund religious publications.

"If universities are going to have [student activities fees], we should have equal access," Rosenberger claims.

The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals disagreed, holding that the university's refusal to fund "religious activities" was justified by UVA's "compelling state interest" in not getting entangled with religion. It would be unconstitutional, the court said, to use public funds for "propagation of the Christian religion."

NEA has joined the Baptist Joint Committee and the American Jewish Congress in a friend-of-the-court brief arguing that it would violate the Constitution to force the government—in this case, UVA—to subsidize overtly religious activities.

An adverse decision by the Court could open the door to vouchers and direct government subsidies for private religious schools.

U.S. v. Lopez

Five years ago, NEA was instrumental in passage of the Gun-Free School Zones Act, a federal law making it a crime to possess a firearm within 1,000 feet of a public or private elementary or secondary school.

The law was prompted by a significant increase in gun-related violence in schools. From 1986 to 1990, six school employees and 65 students were shot and killed at school. During that same period, 201 persons were severely wounded by guns and another 242 people were taken hostage at gunpoint on school premises.

On March 10, 1992, Alfonso Lopez, Jr. was arrested for bringing a .38 caliber handgun onto the premises of Edison High School in San Antonio, Texas, where he was enrolled as a senior. He was later tried and convicted of violating the Gun Free School Zones Act and given a six-month sentence.

But his conviction was thrown out by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which ruled that the law is unconstitutional.

The court noted that the U.S. Constitution grants Congress only "limited and enumerated powers," one of which is the power to regulate "interstate commerce."

Because Congress failed to make any findings in the Act about how the possession of guns on school grounds affects interstate commerce, the court concluded that Congress did not have the constitutional authority to legislate in this area.

NEA has joined a host of other organizations in a friend-of-the-court brief urging the Supreme Court to uphold the law. Other groups signing onto the brief include the Fraternal Order of Police, the National PTA, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the AFT.

The Court will hand down decisions before its summer recess.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

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Years There	Annual Salary* $
Other Income* $	Source

*Alimony, child support, or separate maintenance income need not be revealed if you do not wish it considered as a basis of repayment.

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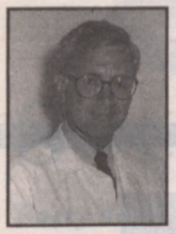
Health

Information about health factors that affect the way students learn



Raymond Koff, M.D., is a professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and chair of the Department of Medicine at MetroWest Medical Center in Framingham and Natick. Formerly with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, he has done extensive research on the spread, prevention, and treatment of hepatitis B.

The ABC's of HEPATITIS

About 200,000 Americans will be infected with hepatitis B this year alone. But, a medical expert explains, the disease is entirely preventable.

Many people think of hepatitis as a serious—but not deadly—illness travelers get from unsafe foods. Are they wrong?
Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. There are five kinds of viral hepatitis—A, B, C, D, and E—all contagious diseases that attack the liver.

Hepatitis A is known as a traveler's disease, generally caused by eating food contaminated with human excrement. While it can cause weeks of disabling illness, it rarely is fatal.

With hepatitis B, we're talking about a much more serious and insidious disease. While most people who get it recover on their own, a small percentage develop chronic liver disease which can lead to scarring of the liver (cirrhosis) and cancer.

Hepatitis B kills 5,000 people in this country per year and is more common and more infectious than AIDS.

Why do you refer to it as insidious?
There already are 1.2 million Americans actively infected with hepatitis B. Many of them don't even know they have it. People can carry the disease and spread it without ever having any symptoms themselves.

There will be 200,000 new cases this year in the United States alone. Some of these people will suffer flu-like or other symptoms for weeks or months or develop the more chronic problems I mentioned. Most will never know they carry the infection unless they're tested for it.

Some 2 to 5 percent of teenagers and adults can't clear the infection from their bodies naturally and are walking time bombs for the spread of the disease.

How can you catch hepatitis B?
People who are exposed to the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person are at risk.

Is there any good news?
Yes. Hepatitis B is an entirely preventable disease. Anyone not already infected who gets a series of three vaccinations is protected. The potential exists to totally eradicate the disease if we could immunize everyone. That's not financially feasible or practical, so we have to target certain groups.

It is current policy in the U.S. that all pregnant women be screened for the virus and that all newborns be immunized either shortly after birth or at two months when other inoculations generally are given.

But many people don't have access to health care.
That's why catch-up programs are so important. State law in Massachusetts, for example, requires children entering kindergarten in September 1996 to be vaccinated.

In Framingham, I've been involved in a very successful school-based program for the past two years, providing the series of three vaccinations to all 11-year-olds who need it.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the U.S. Public Health Service is about to recommend that all 11-year-olds receive these catch-up vaccinations, and there's good evidence that a school-based program like the one in Framingham will work.

Why target that age group?
The idea is to protect children from a disease they're much more likely to get later, between the ages of 15 and 40, when sexual transmission becomes a greater risk as does drug use and the potential sharing of needles and syringes.

Who else in schools should be immunized?
If I had my druthers, I'd do universal immunization, but that's not feasible given that the vaccine is expensive (as much as $150 for the three-shot series). If I had teenage children, I would get them vaccinated.

What about school employees?
There's little risk for the spread of hepatitis B in school activities, so vaccination for most school employees is not generally recommended.

Aside from school nurses (who I'm sure already are getting vaccinations), I would recommend inoculation for those staff members working with developmentally challenged students—they've got a greater risk of exposure to various secretions.

What role can teachers and parents play in combating the spread of hepatitis B?
A number of medical groups and other organizations, including the NEA, are involved in national educational campaigns about hepatitis B. These efforts are crucial because most Americans still don't know about hepatitis B, how one can get it, or about the vaccinations that can prevent it. I urge teachers and parents to get involved in this effort.

Also, where there are sex and health education classes in schools, information about hepatitis B should be included. Because there is so much focus on other sexually transmitted diseases, hepatitis B often is ignored.

Resources

For more information, contact:

- NEA Health Information Network, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7570.
- National Coalition for Adult Immunization—Hepatitis B Action Group, 4733 Bethesda Ave., Suite 750, Bethesda, MD 20814.
- American Liver Foundation, 800/223-0179.
- National Foundation for Infectious Diseases 301/656-0003.

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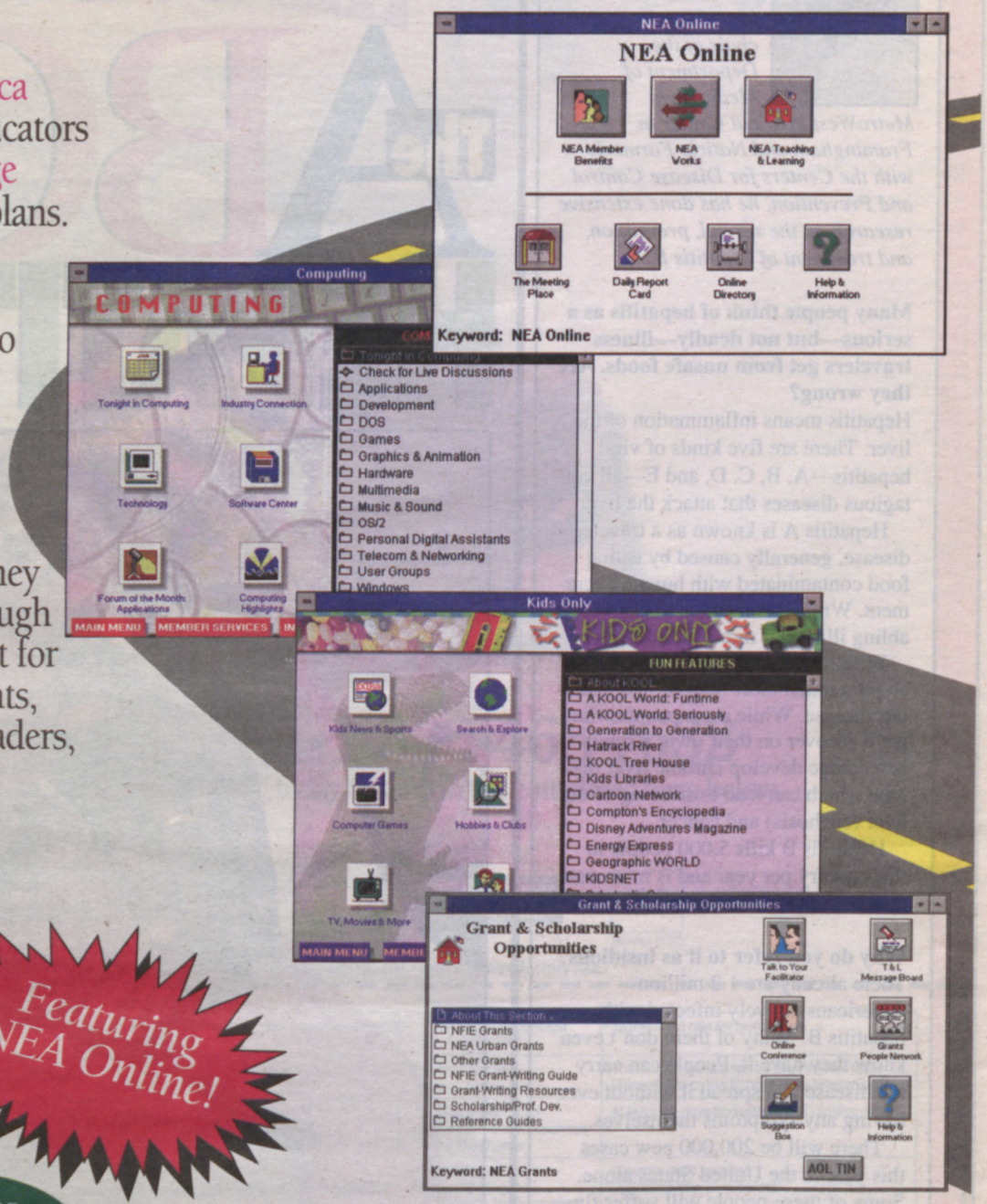

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Sweetwater Success

Every day 1,500 students in California's Sweetwater Union School District tap into an electronic system called NovaNET. What do they get out of it? Just about anything they need.

In California's Sweetwater Union High School District, kids of all backgrounds, talents, and skills share the same computers.

Some of the kids are into lofty thinking, engaging in independent study that would boggle the minds of most adults. Other kids are into more concrete projects, plumbing their computers for help with homework assignments.

Regardless, for an hour or two each day, hundreds of students gather at one of eight alternative learning centers to log on to NovaNET, a communication network that serves up a potpourri of information that students—with help from their teachers—can tailor to their own needs.

Rebekah McGirk writes and researches for the NovaNET's bulletin board.

"NovaNET is an open-ended, flexible, and customizable system," says Sweetwater district administrator Tom Williams. "The system matches up nicely with our concept of educational alternatives—allowing all students to learn."

NovaNET, created by educators at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is maintained and linked to a central telecommunications system at University Communications, Inc. (UCI), in Tucson, Arizona.

The course work, instructional materials, and data bases fit with California curriculum guidelines, but teachers and students fashion them to fit individual needs.

Students are assessed and assigned to the learning centers as they would be assigned to a regular class in their six-hour day, notes Williams. The difference: Students can access remediation or advanced courses from NovaNET, which can range from the competency to premed level.

While the beauty of NovaNET is its ability to meet different students' needs, there are some special features NovaNET offers that appeal to all students.

One of these is called *Sweelit* and is a special communications forum set aside for kids who want to critique one another's writing or share a literary gem.

"I've seen one particularly hostile kid, barely able to write a sentence, start responding on *Sweelit*," says NEA member Dennis Renfro, who codirects NovaNET with Monica Santana.

Student editor John Kleint stimulates online communications by preparing talking points.

"Now that kid has mellowed out somewhat and is online writing his own stuff and responding in full paragraphs and organized thoughts."

Four student editors work with Renfro and Santana on the communications forums—besides *Sweelit*, there's *Sweeforum*, for discussion of current events, and *Sweetalk*, the network's bulletin board service.

These honor students' responsibilities range from preparing base notes—current events talking points—to online editing of student work for content and style.

Ninth grader John Kleint and tenth grader Rebekah McGirk research and write talking points to stimulate bulletin board communications.

"We can present online information to students in a fair, objective way," says Kleint. "I enjoy the dialogue, debate, and personalized responses we get. This has been an unbelievable learning opportunity for me."

Says *Sweelit's* student editor Jessica Thompson: "I've seen a lot of gifted people brought out. It's neat to see what other people think about and have feelings for."

Jessica Thompson says NovaNET often uncovers students' hidden literary talents.

To get more informtion about NovaNET, contact Steve Gardner at University Communications, Inc., 800/YES-NOVA. You can e-mail Tom Williams at Tom Williams/SWEADM/Nova.NET.ORG or Tom_Williams SWEADM@Nova.Nova.NET.ORG.

—Cara Elmore

Endnotes: NEA Online users now have easy access to the Internet. Just click the Internet icon on America Online's opening screen....

Correction: To reach the folks at South Carolina's Brushy Creek Elementary who were featured in last month's Innovation column, type Lynn.Nolan@BBS.SERVE.ORG.

Photos by Bob Riha, Jr.

Teacher Dennis Renfro guides student editor Rebekah McGirk as she works on material for the NovaNET bulletin board.

GETTING STARTED

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TIPS FOR USING NEA ONLINE

Tim Smith
Head custodian, Levey Middle, Southfield, Michigan

I've made lots of friends since I began serving as an NEA Director. Last year, I found an easy way to send them holiday greetings. I keyboarded my message, then copied it to several message boards online. I'm still getting responses to that message. There are so many categories of message boards on NEA Online. Every NEA activist is sure to locate at least one board of particular interest. To explore the message boards, keyword: NEA Meeting. Click NEA Online Message Boards and then List Categories.

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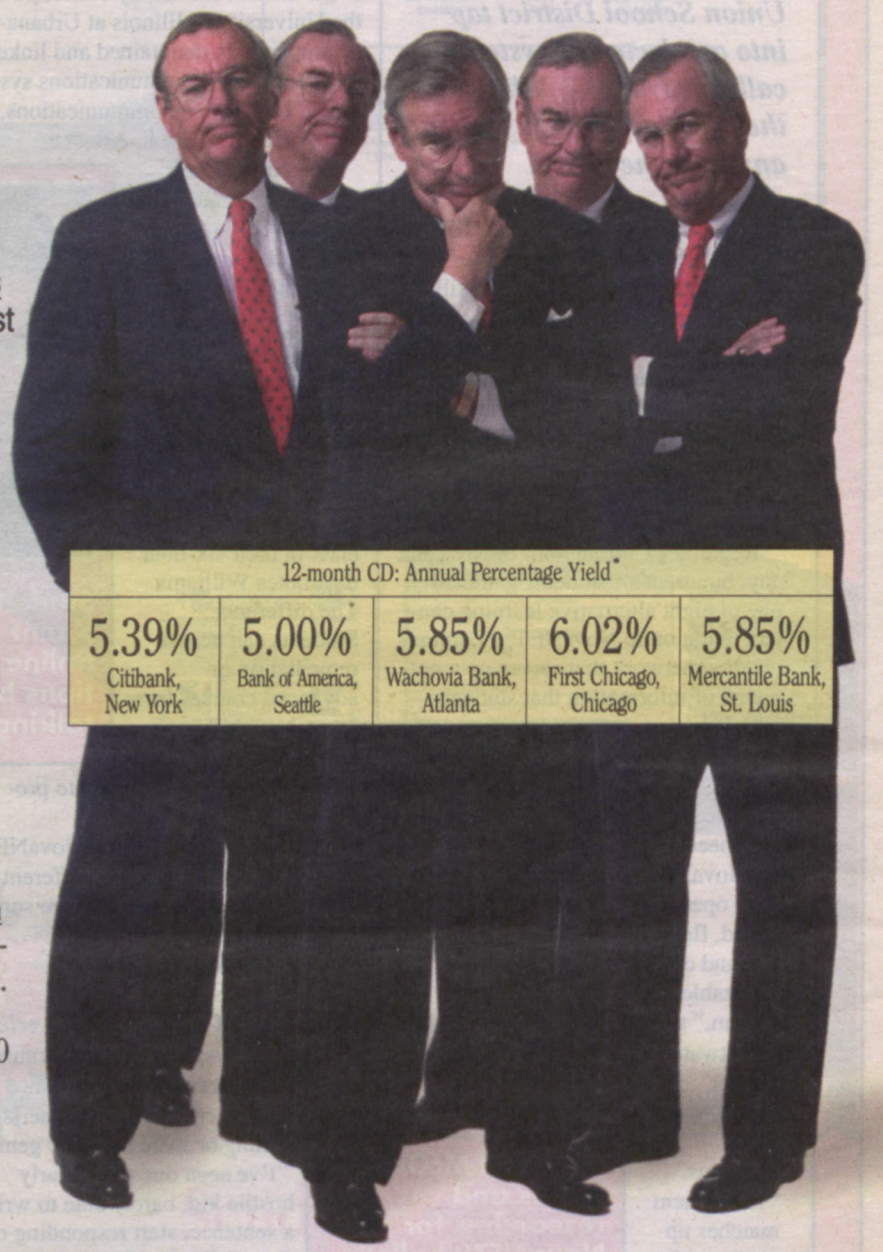

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TCD045

FOR YOUR BENEFIT

DISABILITY

At some point in a working lifetime, one in three Americans suffers an accident or illness that results in loss of income. Few have adequate long-term disability policies to protect.

"The lack of a disability income insurance policy is the biggest gap in most financial portfolios," says Jonathan Pond, a Boston financial planner.

Many people assume that disability coverage is part of their benefits package at work. In fact, 70 percent of employers do not offer disability policies, according to Mark Lucius at Northwestern Mutual, and only 40 percent of Americans with jobs have coverage.

Some companies offer short-term disability insurance that pays a benefit for 30 to 90 days. Others offer an accidental death and dismemberment policy that pays a flat sum if you lose an arm, a leg, or an eye.

Many workers who make the effort to buy a policy either don't have enough coverage or overpay for what they get, partly because they add too many expensive riders to the policy.

What all people who depend on their income need is a basic, no-frills, long-term disability income policy from a sound company that will pay a monthly income if they cannot work.

"It's probably the most important insurance you can buy," said Harold Evensky, a financial planner in Coral Gables, Florida.

Some tips from experts on how to get the best coverage for your money:

➤ Find out what is available to you at work. Death and dismemberment policies that cover you for a short period, such as 60 or 90 days, aren't going to serve you well in the long-term. You'll need more coverage than that.

If you do have a long-term policy at work, find out what the benefit is. Experts recommend a benefit level that is 60 percent to 70 percent of your income. If your employer's policy pays 40 percent, you may want to get a supplemental disability policy.

➤ Check into Social Security disability benefits. Call 800/772-1213 and ask for Form SSA-7004. Return the form. You should get a benefits estimate within four to six weeks.

Requirements for Social Security disability benefits are stringent, but many disability policies offer riders that will pay an additional benefit if you don't receive Social Security.

These riders are a good deal because they are cheaper than buying extra coverage outright.

➤ Check with your state labor department to see if the state pays any disability income to public employees.

➤ Look at your flexible benefits plan—or cafeteria plan—at work, if you have one. You may have an opportunity to "buy" a disability policy with credits your employer gives you.

There are a couple of disadvantages to buying a disability policy through your employer though. First, you could be left without coverage if you change jobs or lose your job, or if your employer changes policies, or is dropped by the insurer.

Second, benefits, should you ever receive them, will be taxable. If you buy your own individual policy and pay for the premiums with after-tax dollars, benefits would be tax free.

Your ability to earn an income is your most important asset. What are you doing to protect it?

On the other hand, individual disability coverage can be expensive. Buying a policy at work may be the best value, particularly if you expect to spend the rest of your career with the same employer.

➤ Consider the two basic types of disability policies. One offers a level, or fixed, annual premium. The lower your age at the time of purchase, the lower the premium you lock in for life.

The second, called renewable term, provides coverage during a specified period, typically a year, and is renewable at a higher rate as you get older.

Here's an example: For a fixed premium of $785 a year, a 30-year-old woman might buy a policy that after a 90-day waiting period, promises to pay a benefit of $2,500 a month until age 65.

She could buy an annually renewable term policy with the same benefit for $396 the first year. It might increase to $464 at age 35, $620 at age 40 and $1,607 at age 55.

Experts say that renewable term policies are best for people under 44.

➤ Look for a basic disability policy. Some policies carry a lot of riders—extra coverage for extra premiums—that can boost costs considerably.

A policy with an automatic cost-of-living adjustment can add up to 50 percent to the premium. A policy that pays benefits for life rather than just to age 65 can increase the premium by up to 75 percent.

These can be valuable features, but the most important goal is to get enough basic coverage to protect yourself.

Insurance agents will urge you to add these costly riders. But many experts say you would be better off getting the highest benefit you can afford and skipping such things as inflation protection and lifetime coverage.

"Get high basic coverage and leave out some of the extras," suggests Glenn S. Daily, an insurance consultant and author of *The Individual Investor's Guide to Low-Load Insurance Products.*

➤ Stretch out the waiting period—the time you must wait before beginning to draw benefits after you become disabled. Most financial planners recommend a 90-day waiting period. But if you have some savings that could tide you over for a while, you might consider an even longer period to reduce your premiums.

➤ Buy a policy from a top-rated company. Look for one with an A++, the new top rating from A.M. Best and a rating of AA or AAA from either Standard & Poor's Corp., Moody's Investor Services, or Duff & Phelps.

—Mary Rowland

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The NEA Income Protection Plans can help you cover any gap between the income you need to maintain your lifestyle and the reduced income you receive.

NEA Member Benefits recently enhanced the NEA Income Protection Plan, underwritten by the Washington National Insurance Company, making it available to more members and providing new and expanded benefits.

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TFA045

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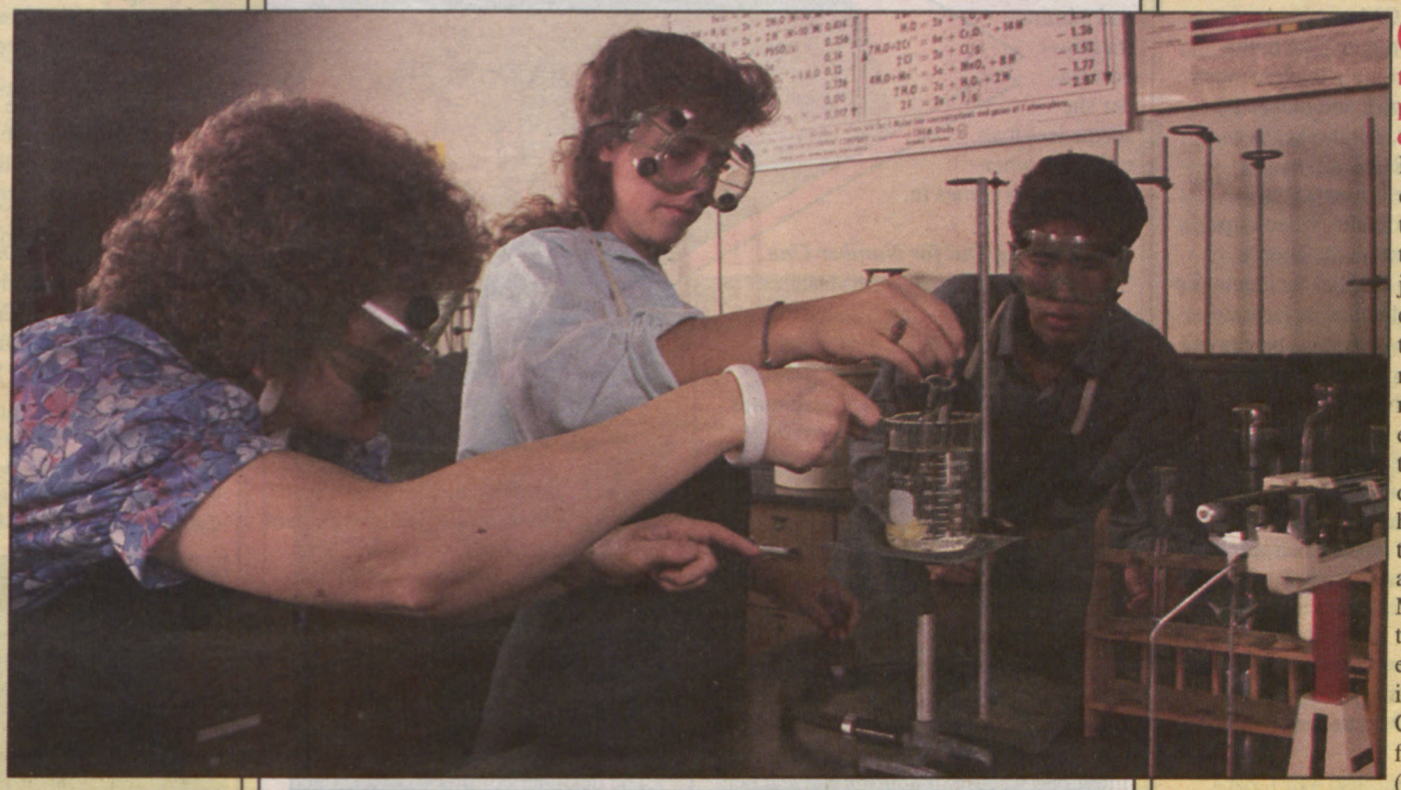

Six reasons why a Massachusetts social studies teacher welcomes national standards of student achievement—in theory, but not in practice.

By Richard Aieta

As a teacher, I'm in a constant state of anxiety about whether what I'm teaching is more worthy than some other, compelling topic. Once I select a topic, I always wonder if there's a better way to teach it.

If I spend time teaching research skills, I fall behind in content. If I knock off a chapter a day, my students come to rely on me as the oracle of all there is that's worth knowing. If I ever let current events sneak in, I run the risk of blowing it all.

I'd welcome the comfort of relying on what experts from the subject fields say is the latest in scholarship and subject area thinking.

In theory, I'd welcome national standards. But not in practice. Not today.

It's my belief that national and state standards don't stand much of a chance of boosting student achievement if they overwhelm, intimidate, or otherwise confuse the teachers who have to deliver them. And, as it stands now, they do.

Here are a half-dozen reasons why:

1. National standards are a top-down reform.

There is an axiom that support for national standards projects increases proportionally to their distance from implementation. That is, those who advocate the loudest for standards are the furthest removed from the classroom.

I don't recall asking in silent prayer, "Give us this day our national standards and deliver us from ignorance. Amen."

Instead, American politicians got together and decided it's about time schools adopt a business model, which states that you can't change what you can't manage and you can't manage what you can't control. Since you can't control what you can't measure and you can't measure what you can't define, the national standards were born to define, measure, control, manage, and ultimately, change American education as we know it.

Isn't that a bit ambitious?

2. There's simply too much paper involved.

"Help, I've fallen, and I can't get up."

No, that's not the plea of an elderly person advertising a medical alert product. It's the cry of an elementary school teacher after she's given copies of the national standards projects in the arts, civics and government, economics, English and language arts, world languages, geography, history, mathematics, physical education, science, health, and social studies.

The average teacher is still wondering if the 2000 in Goals 2000 refers to the target date of achievement, the number of standards individual teachers will be held accountable for, or the total weight, in kilos, of all the literature, documents, and reports written about the effort.

3. There's a cacophony of voices out there.

Each set of standards is written independently of the other. Each uses a different model, and there's no bridge at the national level to get from one standard to the next.

In the field of social studies, for example, Goals 2000 calls for standards in history (U.S. and world), civics and government, geography, and economics. Each is written separately, using different approaches. None of them cross-references the others.

The clamor associated with the release of the United States history standards might not have reached the flash point so quickly if the critics who decried the lack of predominance of the Constitution had read the civics and government standards where the study of the Constitution occupies center stage.

What's happened in education with the standards projects is what happened to the United States military. Called into battle to defeat a common foe, we have learned that each branch of the armed forces had its own language, equipment, and command structure.

The public shouldn't be surprised, therefore, when teachers wave a white flag in surrender.

4. National standards set unrealistic expectations for all students.

Standards embody a "Field of Dreams" approach to educational reform. If you set them (standards), they (students) will achieve.

There isn't a school district in the country that is currently delivering for all its students what each of the national standards says is essential from its particular domain.

To establish what no one is currently doing as the national norm is a prescription for exasperation and cynicism.

5. No one is talking about what to leave out.

All the standards projects acknowledge the tension between coverage and case studies, between depth and breadth. What they don't tell you is that each wants depth in their particular field at the expense of breadth in the others.

To assure comprehensiveness, nothing is left out. That leaves us in a bit of conundrum. My students could reach the national standards in social studies—if I had them until age 27.

6. Teachers don't have the time and support they need to carry this out.

For the average classroom teacher, trying to handle the release of subject matter standards—in addition to educational reform and restructuring efforts—is like trying to take a drink from a fire hose while maintaining balance on a treadmill.

My greatest fear is that the whole effort could turn into a game of Charlie Brown football. Lucy (representing the education reformers) asks Charlie Brown (standing in for teachers) if he wants to come outside and play football.

She tells him it's good for him. He'll get exercise, feel good about himself, and his performance will improve. He resists because he says he's heard it all before. Besides, every time he gets near the football to kick it, she pulls it away.

"Not this time," Lucy pledges. "This time, we're playing for the Super Bowl." He hesitates but finally relents. After all, this is the Super Bowl, and he can't let the fans (students) down.

He gets caught up in the game. Lucy puts the ball in position. He eyes it carefully. He pulls his leg back...

I don't have the confidence to kick away. Do you?

Richard Aieta is a high school social studies teacher and department head in Massachusetts. A member of the Hamilton-Wenham Regional Education Association, Aieta participated in the process of establishing national geography standards and is now helping to establish a state social studies framework.

RESEARCH CLUES

A Little Disk Learning

Teachers—like airplane pilots and kids taking driver ed—can now test their classroom management skills in virtual reality.

A new CD-ROM on classroom management puts you in the middle of trouble in elementary and secondary schools and makes you work your way out. All it takes is a Macintosh, a CD-ROM drive, and Hypercard to make it functional.

The CD-ROM contains video clips and background text on the people involved in all-too-familiar incidents. To "play," you watch the video, indicate when teacher intervention is appropriate by clicking on the picture, then compare your decisions to those recommended by the designers.

A journal feature prompts more complex thinking about notions of good management—ideas that appear consistent with results of research on teaching.

Critical incidents or "cases" of teacher-student interaction include:

➤ ***Your Cheatin' Heart.*** Mr. Flores challenges students to do university-level physics, but Manuel and Linda have other ideas.

➤ ***Walk on the Wild Side.*** Ms. Webster, a science teacher, believes she is being pegged as weak on discipline, and Robert provides an opportunity to change her image.

➤ ***It's My Tardy.*** Willie thinks Mrs. Adams plays favorites, and he offers Angela up as an example.

➤ ***Apparent Conference.*** Mrs. Clark feels overworked and caught between parents and administration—no wonder she seems less than engaging when Billy's mom comes in.

➤ ***Looking Out for Number One.*** Mr. Fitzell, former engineer, teaches math with a passion, but his students want some time to talk to one another.

➤ ***Low Five.*** In the first five minutes of class, Ms. Butler makes an example out of Charles, who is getting pressure from home to excel in his studies.

➤ ***High Five.*** In the first five minutes of class, Ms. Butler redeems herself with some class moves.

The creators staged the videos and made them brief. They tightly circumscribed the background material. The accompanying instruction—the option to input one's sense of appropriate teacher intervention—is a fairly simplistic exercise. Yet, there is much to be admired about this work.

Beyond its practical value to help teachers prevent and deal with classroom management issues, the designers have staked a claim on strategically important professional territory.

With this CD-ROM, they move into the conceptual space between paper-and-pencil activities and real-life classroom performance—the space occupied by cases, simulations, portfolios, etc.

Here lies a powerful conception of the future of teaching and testing teachers.

The designers of this CD-ROM and others who want to occupy this territory worry about how to make technology serve rather than control teachers. They try to produce tests and educational materials that exhibit high "face validity" or "authenticity"—in other words, that seem relevant to real life.

If they can connect their work to what really happens in schools, then teachers might just take their cases seriously and use them to make sense out of life in their own classrooms.

These are hefty challenges, and the stakes are high. Those who meet them will shape the course of testing, licensure, certification, and professional development for years to come.

You won't see the whole game through this knot hole, but you will get a real sense of the action, and you just might improve your management skills, too.

Interactive Cases in Teacher Education: Classroom Management by Peter Desberg, Joel Colbert, & Kimberly Trimble is available from Allyn and Bacon Publishers for $20. To order, call 800/278-3525.

Robert McNergney is professor of education at the University of Virginia. His e-mail address is rfm@virginia.edu.

A new issue of *Teaching and Change* is out with more good material about school renewal and change. The current journal, co-produced with Corwin Press, carries articles on cooperative learning, portfolio assessment, teaching style and classroom environment, and student community service. If you're interested in writing an article for the journal, call editor Karen Zauber at 202/822-7785.

The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence

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The First-Year Teacher will help you "hit the ground running!" 200pp. 1994. (1862-1-10-D) Regular price, $18.95

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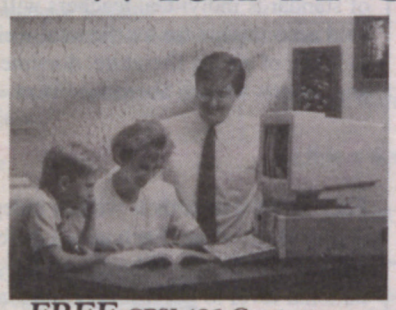

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LOOKING AHEAD TO RETIREMENT

GUARDING THE GATE

More and more NEA members are serving on state pension boards. Their toughest job: protecting pension funds against raids and risky investments.

More than 300 NEA members, active and retired, serve as trustees of retirement and health benefit funds, according to NEA Research. That's up from just 28 half a dozen years ago.

As trustees, NEA members help protect the funds from the growing threat of raids by deficit-ridden state governments, guard against risky investments, and make sure the rights of teachers and retirees are protected.

The three NEA members profiled here explain why they serve as fund trustees and what they hope to accomplish.

Bill Dorsey, Ohio

Many people are intimidated by the term "fiduciary responsibility," but not NEA member Bill Dorsey, a 28-year veteran math teacher in Ohio.

Dorsey left his teaching job two years ago to serve as secretary/treasurer of the Ohio Education Association (OEA) and chair the Board of Trustees of the State Teacher Retirement System (STRS) of Ohio.

STRS has assets of $28 billion—all of which are managed in-house—and boasts one of the largest real estate portfolios in the world.

What would motivate a teacher to agree to oversee billions of dollars of other people's retirement money?

"I've always been interested in investment," says Dorsey, who's been a member of the pension board for the past five years. "I also thought my personal business and Association experience could add a new dimension to the Board.

"Beyond that, our system's been under pressure to improve benefits for active and retired members," Dorsey notes, particularly with regard to health care.

"One of the things we give retirees is a full health care plan through the retirement system," he explains. "We also provide a Medicare supplement for those over age 65. It costs the retirement system millions of dollars a year to provide those benefits."

One of the Board's main objectives over the past several years has been to ensure the long-term funding of these benefits.

"When I came on the Board five years ago, available funding was $35 million," Dorsey continues. "Today, it's just under $800 million."

Since Ohio's educators are not part of the Social Security system, Dorsey says he feels a great responsibility.

"Our pension is our only retirement benefit," he explains. "I want to do everything in my power to preserve the financial integrity of the system, both for retirees and for those who have yet to retire."

William Fisher, Tennessee

NEA-Retired member William Fisher, a trustee of the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS), takes pride in his Board's accomplishments.

Fisher, a retired business professor, was elected to the Board in 1980 by the teachers of East Tennessee.

Last year, the Tennessee state legislature passed a 5 percent increase in benefits for all those covered by the retirement system. Sound investments, says Fisher, made the hike possible.

Also, beginning this year, TCRS, which has assets of about $12 billion, will send an annual benefits statement to all its members.

Fisher has several reasons for serving as a trustee, including an interest in business-related issues and a desire to serve teachers in his state. But his main motivation was an experience he had early in his career.

"I started out teaching in the public schools in Detroit," he explains. "I put in enough time there to be vested, and then went into higher education.

"Eventually, I withdrew my funds from the Michigan retirement system. Had I kept them there, I'd have gotten full medical, dental, and vision coverage when I retired. Those benefits would certainly be significant today.

"Obviously I made a mistake," Fisher acknowledges. "But that experience triggered my interest in retirement issues and led to my becoming a trustee."

Years later, Fisher says he's proud to serve as a trustee, "to monitor the situation, ask appropriate questions, and see that things are done correctly."

Edna Snow, Rhode Island

NEA-R member Edna Snow, a trustee of the Rhode Island Employees Retirement Fund for nearly 12 years, sees her role as both protective and proactive.

"I think it's vitally important to have someone on the Board who understands retirees' concerns and protects their rights," says Snow, a retired reading teacher elected by her state's retirees.

Snow sought a position on the Board in part because of her interest in financial issues.

"Also, I like dealing with people," she says, "giving them correct information and helping them get what they're entitled to. Mostly, I like being part of such an important program."

The Rhode Island Employees Retirement Fund has assets of about $3.4 billion.

Snow hopes that more NEA member trustees will take advantage of the Association's educational programs for trustees. Last year, at the 1994 Retirement and Benefits Forum, NEA sponsored the first workshop for members who serve as trustees.

The program was intended to provide training and a forum for comparing notes and learning from the experience of others. It will be repeated at this year's conference, to be held in November in San Francisco.*

NEA members who serve on pension boards can make a difference in the way a fund operates, Snow says. "We can make sure our state retirement system is working for the benefit of those who've paid into it."

**For more information about NEA's network for pension and health fund trustees, contact NEA Research, 202/822-7400.*

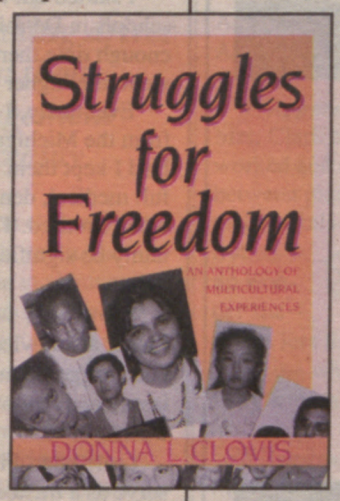
A variety of member benefits are available to NEA-R members through NEA-Retired and NEA Member Benefits. For more information on NEA Member Benefits programs, call toll-free 800/637-4636.

BOOK BEAT

Recipes Included

Pick 15 places. Sprinkle in interviews of their people. Add poems. Fold in recipes. Mix well and serve to students everywhere.

Struggles for Freedom: An Anthology of Multicultural Experiences. Donna L. Clovis. Bryant & Dillon Publishers, Inc., 143 pp. $11.95.



"It doesn't matter if they come from Colombia or Tiananmen Square, people still want the same thing—freedom."

That's the message NEA member Donna Clovis delivers in this thoughtful "anthology of multicultural experiences" geared to students in grades 5 and up, but suitable for adults, too. The book is made up of 15 brief chapters, each covering places—from Bosnia to Haiti—where discrimination or repression is a fact of life.

Each chapter includes a map, an original poem by Clovis, a first-person account from a native, an interview, and a relatively simple recipe. ("I think you can learn a lot about a culture by eating," Clovis explains.)

Fried yam chips aside, some of the stories are particularly powerful.

One example: this tale of escape told by an unnamed Haitian refugee. "Suddenly, we heard screams and cries for help! The neighboring boat had split, causing all of the people on board to spill into the icy sea. We wanted to help, but couldn't. We had too many people on our boat, too. The cries died out shortly as the turbulence and monstrous sound of the ocean swallowed up the dead."

Clovis, a published poet since the age of 11, set out 10 years ago to write a book of poetry. Instead, *Struggles for Freedom* was born of her experiences as a world traveler, conversationalist, and elementary ESL teacher in Princeton, New Jersey—a town with quite a few transient world travelers.

"Sometimes we focus too much on the differences between people andthat polarizes us more," Clovis explains.

"I wanted this book to focus on what unites us as a people. No matter what culture or race, all people value fredom."

A story worth telling—and teaching.

—Stefanie Weiss

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2	***Student Portfolios,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Insights into using portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (#2901-1-00-FB)	[1]
3	***Toward Inclusive Classrooms,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Students with special needs *can* learn with their peers. (#2903-8-00-FB)	[3]
4	***Innovative Discipline,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) New discipline strategies that teachers say really work! (#2904-6-00-FB)	[4]
5	***The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8),*** by Bosch and Kersey. Member's price: $14.95. (#1862-1-10-FB)	[2]
6	***Time Strategies,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Ways busy teachers restructure school time. (#2902-X-00-FB)	[6]
7	***Children of Promise: Literate Activity in Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Classrooms,*** by Heath and Mangiola. $8.95. (#1844-3-00-FB)	[7]
8	***Countdown to the First Day of School,*** by Schell and Burden. ($4.95) A must-have checklist for new elementary teachers. (#2150-9-00-FB)	[11]
9	***School-Based Change,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Tips, tricks, and techniques for avoiding the pitfalls of school restructuring. (#2905-4-00-FB)	[10]
10	***Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools,*** by Stein and Sjostrom. Members price: $15.95. (#1864-8-00-FB)	[8]

The numbers in brackets indicate last month's rank, if any. All the resources listed above are published by and available from the NEA Professional Library, a service for NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community. To order any book listed here or for more information, call **800/229-4200**. (Note: a shipping and handling charge is added to all orders.)

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INTERNATIONAL

RIGHTS WATCH

Rwanda

More than half of all Rwanda's teachers were killed in the recent genocide that took one million lives. Many of the surviving educators are homeless and living in appalling conditions in refugee camps.

The union representing teachers in Rwanda confirmed that many members, leaders, trade union officers, and employees were killed or fled the country.

What's happened to the children? Late in 1994, several agencies of the United Nations set up emergency education programs for 700,000 Rwandan children, aged 5 to 14.

The first word in the new alphabet primer is reported to be "amahora," the Kinyarwandan word for "peace."

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Teachers' Association (ETA), a national affiliate of the Education International (EI), was disenfranchised recently when the Transitional Government of Ethiopia recognized a more favored group as the official teachers' representative.

ETA's name, offices, and assets were transferred to the "pretender" organization. The original union reportedly filed suit, claiming the government erred in recognizing the pretenders. Sources say the court ruled in favor of the original union.

The government and the pretender organization will likely appeal the decision.

Human Rights Worldwide

Amnesty International's 1994 annual report paints a grim picture of human rights in 151 countries.

Its conclusion: 1993 produced no significant progress toward achieving human rights around the world.

Among the rights violations reported:

- 10,000 extra-legal executions in 61 countries.
- 100,000 political prisoners locked up without trial in 53 countries.
- Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners in 112 countries.
- Political assassinations in 61 countries.

The report stresses that activists and campaigners are increasingly under attack from their own governments.

What You Can Do

Join Amnesty International USA (AIUSA). You'll be working to apply a single standard of human rights to every country in the world. Write AIUSA, 322 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 1000l.

Give a Little—Get a Lot

Students at a Maryland high school help piece together a Liberian school torn apart by civil war.

To commemorate Black History Month, NEA member Diana Beasley suggested to a group of students at Potomac High School in Oxon Hill, Maryland, that they adopt a Liberian high school.

Liberia holds special significance, she told students in the international issues class, because it was settled by freed African-American slaves.

Now the African nation is in the midst of one of the most violent civil wars Africa has ever seen. More than 20,000 children serve as combatants in the war, while as many as 500 children die each week. In the past six years, 75,000 children have died—and shooting continues. In the meantime, schools there are devastated.

David Emanuel

Rhonda Hanson, teacher of the international issues class, and Beasley, Potomac High's program director, knew the students would want to help. They just didn't know how much.

Potomac's seniors rolled up their sleeves, did research, collected money, spoke to groups of students, even made their case on the internationally-broadcast "Voice of America." They turned the idea into an ongoing, school-wide project.

As a result, the students at Paynesville Community High School in Liberia will receive books, school supplies, and eventually computers to help them piece together a school devastated by war.

Hanson and Beasley, both NEA members for more than 20 years, got the idea for the project at a meeting with members of the Liberian Children's Rehabilitation Network (LCRN) in December, 1994.

They introduced the project to Hanson's international issues class, then the students took over.

"It began with my international issues class and then expanded to the international finance class, the international cooking class, the Afro-American studies class, student government—until the whole school became involved," Hanson explains.

"We just told the other kids about Liberia—its historical significance and its current struggles. They could relate," says Keami Ferguson, a senior. "They wanted to help."

Before Potomac could "adopt" a Liberian school, the LCRN held a nationwide contest in Liberia to select a worthy recipient. Among other requirements, the school had to demonstrate the impact of the war on its facilities.

"The kids at Paynesville High School in Liberia have to bring their own chairs to school," Hanson says. "Doors are missing, the plumbing and electrical systems aren't working. They have many problems."

These are problems Potomac students aim to fix. They've already raised more than $900. And the students plan to form a pen-pal program, communicate via the Internet, and establish a teacher/student exchange between the two countries.

"I didn't know about Liberia before I got involved with this project," says senior Joy Gibson. "I've learned so much. I realize how fortunate I am to be able to get an education."

—Andrea Nicholson

Pictured in top photo, some of the Potomac (Maryland) High School students involved in the effort to help students in war-torn Liberia, along with their teacher-advisers Rhonda Hanson (far left), and Diana Beasley (far right).

ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

The Status of Women

By whatever standard of measure you choose, the status of women in the majority of societies pales in comparison to the status of men.

Women are paid less than men. Fewer women than men occupy top jobs in business, education, and government.

The international sex trade is primarily made up of poor or uneducated girls or women. Too many pre-teen girls are found, not in school, but in sweatshops working in dangerous conditions at starvation wages. Of the world's 900 million illiterates, nearly 600 million are female.

The same men who rage against human rights violations in governmental forums are often not troubled when women are denied the right to vote, own property, divorce, control their own bodies, and drive automobiles.

It will require a coordinated international effort to improve the status of women worldwide. A few steps along the way:

➤ Nearly 50 years ago, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, making no distinction between the rights of men and those of women.

➤ The United Nations established a Commission on the Status of Women to monitor women's rights.

➤ A United Nations program called UNIFEM supports the inclusion of women as decision makers in national development projects.

➤ The United Nations Convention To Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and Girls has been ratified by many nations.

➤ Next fall, the UN will convene the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

The International Labor Organization and International Trade Secretariats, such the Education International (of which NEA is a member), are supporting these major strategies, in addition to a campaign to end child labor and pornography.

For more information, contact NEA's Office for International Relations, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

YOUR NEA

NEA Awards Urban Grants to 10 Affiliates

Here — from Battle Creek to Virginia Beach — are the latest projects to receive NEA grants to improve urban education.

Since 1985, NEA has offered help to urban affiliates for innovative initiatives designed to meet specific urban educational needs. Each of this year's 10 winners will receive $3,000 from NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education (CRUE).

The grants were announced by NEA President Keith Geiger at the recent meeting of the National Council of Urban Education Associations, a group that represents NEA urban locals across the nation.

The Urban Grant projects emphasize a variety of issues central to education reform, including technology, parental and community involvement in education, student assessment, and teacher professional development.

"Cooperation, collaboration, and community are the trademarks of the programs developed by this year's grant winners," says Geiger. "These are local initiatives, tailored to meet specific urban educational needs and involving school employees, parents, students and the community-at-large in important school improvement efforts."

Arizona. The Paradise Valley Education Association will help school employees and community members meet a new state mandate to share decision-making authority. The Association will organize councils within the district's 35 schools to reflect their ethnic composition and bring together parents, teachers, other school staff, concerned citizens, and students.

Kansas. The Olathe-NEA will receive a grant to support efforts to raise students' self-esteem, instill leadership skills, and improve their academic performance. Students will participate in hands-on activities in mathematics, science, nutrition, exercise, and other subjects with an emphasis on cooperative learning and skills development. The program will also provide students and families with opportunities to attend cultural events.

Kentucky. The Jefferson County Teachers Association will continue a computer training project for parents launched last year at Roosevelt-Perry Elementary School in Louisville. Using the school's in-house technology, students at Roosevelt-Perry teach computer skills to their parents, many of whom lack a high school diploma.

Michigan. The Battle Creek Education Association will continue the Neighborhood Based Action (NBA) program started last year at Fremont Elementary School. The successful program divides the school into six to eight "neighborhoods" where teachers and community leaders work with parents to increase their school involvement.

New Mexico. NEA-Las Cruces will continue its professional development efforts by providing resources for 10 workshops for both new and experienced education staff during 1995. These include monthly workshops on skills enhancement for veteran professionals and a one-day district-wide event.

Ohio. The South-Western Education Association in Grove City will reach out to preschool parents by providing information that will aid children in the transition to school life. Parents of preschoolers will receive information on discipline at home, reading instruction, and listening effectively, while kindergarten parents will learn to get involved in their child's school and help with reading and writing.

Oregon. The Eugene Education Association will train local teachers in MegaSkills, a program that helps parents encourage and reinforce life skills. Teachers will train parents, who will go on to instruct others interested in using MegaSkills with their own children.

Texas. The Beaumont Teachers Association will help train local citizens to teach basic English skills to immigrant parents. The Association will offer limited-proficiency English lessons and adult literacy in both English and the native language for parents.

Utah. The Alpine, Nebo, and Provo Education Associations will join with local social service agencies to establish "Kids Cause," a pilot program designed to ensure that students' physical and social needs—ranging from eyeglasses to clothing—will not interfere with their ability to learn.

Virginia. The Virginia Beach Education Association will continue a two-year school restructuring program within the Virginia Beach City Public Schools and support a community forum designed to prepare preschoolers for their first school years.

—Victoria Lytle

Don't Buy, Here's Why

NEA has authorized boycotts against these products and services.

➤ *Stimson Lane Wines.* Last October, the NEA Board of Directors voted to boycott Stimson Lane Wines after finding that the company hadn't acted in good faith in labor negotiations and had endangered the health and lives of farm workers and consumers through the use of toxic chemicals. Stimson Lane Wines are marketed under the following labels: Chateau Ste. Michelle, Columbia Crest, Farron Ridge, Snoqualmie, and Allison Combs.

➤ *Marriott Corporation.* In October, 1993, the NEA Board of Directors condemned the Marriott Corporation for its continued antilabor posture, in particular, its treatment of members of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union in San Francisco. In addition, NEA opposes Marriott's role in prompting school boards to contract out services. NEA will not boycott Marriott facilities that use union labor.

➤ *California Table Grapes.* Nearly 10 years ago, the NEA Board of Directors voted to support the United Farm Workers boycott of table grapes to try to restore bargaining rights for farm workers. A California law enabling farm workers to organize and bargain had been largely gutted and ignored by a state governor and administration more sympathetic to grape growers than to farm workers. In addition, NEA members expressed concern that the grape growers were spraying their fields with toxic pesticides that pose a serious danger to farm workers.

Prior Boycotts

Last year NEA lifted its boycott of the Shell Oil Company and the International Paper Company. The Shell Oil boycott began as a protest of apartheid—it was lifted when South Africa held free national elections and began to dismantle the system of apartheid.

The International Paper Company boycott began in September 1988 and was lifted in February 1994 at the request of the United Paperworkers International Union.

In the past, NEA has maintained and then lifted boycotts against:

➤ *States that didn't pass the Equal Rights Amendment*—1975-'82.

➤ *J.P. Stephens*—1977-'82.

➤ *Nestle Products and Stouffer Hotels*—1980-'84.

➤ *Red Coach Lettuce*—1984-'87.

➤ *Coors Beer*—1984-'87.

➤ *Trans World Airlines*—1986-'91.

➤ *Eastern Airlines*—1989-'91.

➤ *Continental Airlines*—1989-'91.

➤ *Folgers Coffee*—1990-'92.

Your NEA

IN THE NEWS

ABC Television and its 150 affiliates will team up with the NEA and the Coalition for America's Children for a second year to broadcast "Children First."

This series of national public service announcements and programs focuses on children's issues and gives adults ideas on how they can help children grow up.

As part of the effort, ABC affiliates around the country will sponsor special events, including free immunizations and tutoring programs.

One of these special projects is a "volunteerathon" in Miami, where viewers call in to pledge volunteer hours to help kids.

The Miami project was sponsored by WPLG, working closely with the United Way of Dade and Broward counties. The Volunteerathon was responsible for over 6 million hours in pledged volunteer time.

KOCO-TV in Oklahoma City has created a new Children First initiative called Project SayYes (Seniors and Youth Education Shared). Through SayYes, KOCO brings together senior volunteers with students. The project is supported by the Oklahoma City schools and local senior citizen groups.

For more information, call ABC Corporate Initiatives at 212/456-6356 or FAX Capital Cities/ABC at 212/456-1274.

SHORT TAKES

Next November, NEA will offer training for 50 members who are interested in running for local, state, or national Association office. Campaigning to Win, will cover how to assess your readiness to run for an office, plan a campaign, use technology, raise money, and deliver speeches.

The program is open to all NEA members, *except those who plan to announce a candidacy between September 1,1995 and August 31, 1996.* Apply to your state affiliate by mid-May. For more information,contact NEA staffers Gaye Barker (202/822-7732)or Betty Jeung (202/822-7736).

SPEAKING OUT ON THE ISSUES

Curious George® Teaches Nutrition

Curious George® is a busy monkey these days. He's part of an NEA-supported campaign to teach children to read food labels—and learn about nutrition.

"Read it before you eat it," George tells kids ages four to 10 in both English and Spanish-language radio and television commercials set airing now. "Curious George," they say, "doesn't monkey around with food."

The public service advertising campaign was created by KIDSNET, a Washington-based group, with help from NEA and a host of other prominent groups. Two government agencies—the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)—supported the effort.

Carolyn Salisbury

Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala was on hand at a Washington D.C. area school to help kick off a new campaign designed to teach kids how to read food labels—and learn about nutrition.

NEA Health Information Network Director Jim Williams explained the role NEA played in the project at a national press conference attended by FDA Commissioner David Kessler and HHS Secretary Donna Shalala.

"NEA surveyed teachers attending a conference on health issues," Williams said. "We made sure that classroom educators had a voice in developing these ads."

The survey data NEA collected led KIDSNET to:

- Target children from pre-school to grade six, with emphasis on kids aged four to 10.
- Develop a message that's entertaining and fun—and can compete for children's attention.
- Use a cartoon character—something that all kids like.
- Use television to deliver the message.
- Recognize that children's education materials can be a bridge to reaching adults, too.

To help parents teach their kids to read labels, KIDSNET produced a companion brochure, funded by IronKids Bread. To get a free copy, write to the Consumer Information Center, ATTN: KIDSNET, Pueblo, CO 81009. For the Spanish-language version, direct mail to KIDSNET-*Espanol.*

NEA will be working with KIDSNET to prepare a curriculum guide teachers can use to teach about food labels. If you'd like to have input in its development, write to NEA's Health Information Network, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

WORKING FOR YOU

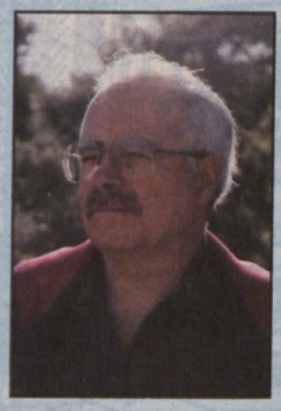
The Importance of Vision

Sal Varela, an organizational specialist in NEA's western region for some 20 years, believes school employees should have a vision.

"It doesn't matter if you can't draw anything but stick figures," Varela says. "In my workshops, everyone draws a picture that represents where they are now and where they'd like to be five years from now.

"Sometimes they start out with a picture of a war zone," Varela continues, "and end up with an all-American-looking school with a flag out front. Educators are optimists—most envision success in the future."

Varela travels a nine-state region, conducting strategic planning workshops for a wide range of groups within the Association. NEA's Western region covers the states of Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, Kansas, Utah, Texas, and Nebraska.



Sal Varela, Organizational Specialist NEA Western Regional Office

Varela's visioning process combines both pictures and words. After drawings are finished, Varela asks workshop participants to write up a statement about the group's collective vision.

"It's a very useful process," Varela explains. "It gets people to think about—and talk about—what's important"

And it doesn't stop there. Varela goes on to show workshop participants how to use strategic planning to achieve their vision. They prioritize elements of their vision, then plan how to focus resources on their priorities.

"The process of visioning encourages members to take charge, to be proactive," says Varela. "It's an alternative to sitting back and merely reacting to change."

Letters

Why Not Enough?

I just finished reading the article on Leza Francis' struggle as a first year teacher (cover story, March). I can truly sympathize with her experience; teaching does seem to have the cruelest initiation of any profession.

However, I am becoming extremely annoyed at all the "whining" I am increasingly hearing from colleagues about how much money they make. True, most educators do not receive salaries comparable to their worth. To say that a person can't live independently on $20,770 is a puzzlement and an outrage.

It brings to mind something I've long kept quiet. My family of five lives off of my salary of $25,625 (that's gross not net), and the $400 or so my wife brings home working part time. And this is in California where the cost of living has skyrocketed.

I'm curious as to how my family makes it at under $30k a year, while I hear many colleagues who are single, or who have families smaller than mine, or who have two teachers in the family, say they are having difficulties. It's no wonder the general view of the public is that teachers are overpaid. I'm happy to get what I have, even if it isn't reflective of my worth. What ever happened to making the most of what you have?

Stan Smith
Yuba City, California

Paddling Lessons

Thanks for the story on peer mediation (Cover story, February). I'm sincerely impressed with the positive results at Duval High and thousands of other schools that have incorporated this innovative program.

But what can be done to reduce teacher-on-student violence? Last year alone, there were over 500,000 "paddlings" of public school students. With educators from 23 states using pain and fear to solve their problems, national efforts to reduce classroom violence are drenched in hypocrisy.

There must be more that we can do to remove the vile practice of corporal punishment from all schools. Is there a mediation program for instructors who still hit their students?

Absent such a program, what can we do to make corporal punishment districts understand that non-violence must be demonstrated before it can be learned?

Robyn McFetridge
North Pole, Alaska

Support For 187

As a former immigrant to the United States, I find California's Proposition 187 refreshing and support it heartily (Legal Times, February).

When my family immigrated from the Netherlands in the '60s, we looked to the United States as the land for opportunity. I can remember my dad studying English before coming to the States. When he arrived, he made sure he had a job and a sponsor who could help him make the transition from one country to another. Once he got situated, he sent for us.

We came here to become productive, not a burden on society.

Now we're seeing a backlash against those people who want to take this country for a ride by abusing social services and the welfare system. How long can this country last when we continually pay for all these services?

I can safely say there are a lot more people like me who say enough is enough. If a person wants to come to the States, do it legally, become productive, and learn English.

Rob Nieraeth
Poplar, Montana

Why Tell Us?

The glossy insert in the February issue of *NEA Today* ("Why Public Schools? A Primer on Democracy, Community, and Opportunity") was a real piece of work.

It was beautifully presented and artfully crafted to reinforce in the membership's psyche the goal of public education.

But those of us who go to work everyday striving to educate the children of America know full well the goals of public education. I fail to see why you need to educate us. We are the folks in the trenches.

Tell the public what you're telling us. It's time to start right now. Stop spending on us and start spending the money on the folks who think we're not doing our jobs. Hurry up. They're gaining on us.

Toby Kiritsis
Livonia, Michigan

Burden?

My husband and I, both teachers, find the cartoon in the February issue (Letters) offensive and a thorough misrepresentation of the intent of the school prayer issue.

If reinstated correctly, school prayer should be represented not as an additional burden to the student, but held up as a help and guide to ameliorate and balance the rest of the problems.

Obviously, the author of the cartoon and editors of the magazine see voluntary prayer as only another problem to the student and educational system. Unfortunately, they fail to recognize the strength and guidance available to those who do add prayer to help cope with life's many burdens.

Sally K. Madison
Lansing, Michigan

Highway Robber

I was appalled that you saw fit to profile the exploits of the Tennessee sheriff who confiscated $897,000 from the driver of a car pulled over for speeding (Heroes & Zeroes, February).

Unless I misread your item, the money was taken from a suspected drug dealer under federal forfeiture laws. I emphasize the word "suspected" because under the United States Constitution, those accused of a crime are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The federal forfeiture statutes, which came into being under the Reagan administration, ignore this basic principle of law, permitting the wholesale seizure of private property, even property not directly related to the alleged crime, from suspects prior to trial.

Surely you are aware that this includes people accused of drug trafficking who are later found innocent. You may not realize that those found innocent have an extremely difficult time reclaiming their confiscated property, and some never recover it.

Far from deserving commendation for his actions, this Tennessee sheriff is really nothing more than a highway robber with a badge.

W. Luther Jett
Washington Grove, Maryland

Girls And Math

Should schools offer all-girl math classes? (Debate, February). That's a topic near and dear to my heart, since the problems addressed by the question have deeply influenced my career choices and my life.

I wanted to be a mathematician—until I reached college. Much of my high school success with math was due to the encouragement of my teacher and mentor, Bernice Pollyea. Thanks to her instruction, I placed out of two year's of college work.

The teaching assistants in my first college math class told me, "Girls don't do mathematics. We're going to wash you out by the end of the class." They didn't. I was determined to make it.

What's strange is that my experience in co-ed classes, with male instructors, led me to accept what they said as real. It never occurred to me that I might have some recourse to any authority in this war against my talent and ambition.

I finally did drop math at the end of my second year of college. I was one of two women in the class. The guys took home the 20 homework problems each night, split them up, discussed the solutions, and shared the answers. Women were excluded because we weren't allowed in the men's dorms.

It wasn't math I lost interest in. It was math's men-only subculture that made me feel I had hit a brick wall. Girls today need to be taught what to do when they encounter one of these dominance games.

Ed Bleeden [who argued against all-girl math classes] should observe some women-only math classes and practice some self-examination. I suspect he's slighting his female students unconsciously, because he hasn't yet considered the extent to which math itself is a male-dominated interest.

Constance Fay
Oakland, California

Smoking

You should be ashamed of publishing erroneous "facts" such as those stated by Michael Eriksen [director of the U.S. Office on Smoking and Health] in your recent column about student smoking (Health, February).

While there is no argument about the health dangers associated with smoking, Eriksen can't claim that just because kids smoke certain brands more, they were led to smoke by advertising.

Kids who smoke may prefer Marlboro or Camels due to advertising by those brands, but kids smoke because of peer pressure and perceived glamour. If the Marlboro Man and Joe Camel disappeared, teen smokers might switch to other brands, but they would continue to smoke. And younger kids would still begin the habit, because the peer pressure and glamour would remain.

Jon W. Nelson
Kearney, Nebraska

Mike Peters Dayton Daily News Tribune Media Services

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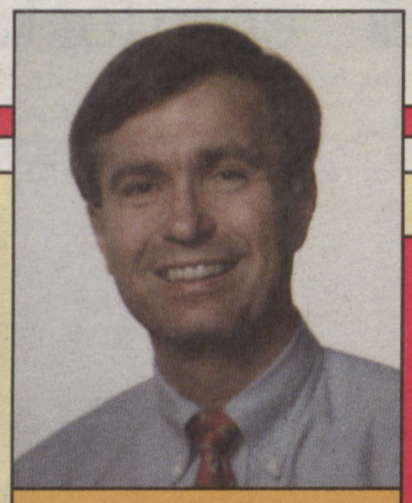
Debate

YES

Should Schools Become Police Beats?



NO

Brian Peck is parts manager for the Operations Department of the Union Public School District in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He's been an active member of the Union Support Personnel Association, since "day one, when we became part of NEA five years ago." Peck is USPA president and has also served as chief negotiator.

Steve Babiec has been teaching high school physics and chemistry for 19 years, the last 11 of them at Mt. Hope High School in Bristol, Rhode Island. He's immediate past president of the former Bristol Education Association, now part of the newly merged Bristol-Warren Education Association.

Certainly police should patrol schools. Their very presence is a great crime deterrent. I speak from personal experience on this issue because, for the past several years, my suburban district of 11,000 students has been hiring local police to patrol the high school and intermediate school during their off-duty hours.

It works. Whether the intruders are kids from another district on a joyride, gangs looking for trouble, graffiti artists—any type of vandal—the sight of a patrol car heads them off.

Our district, in fact, straddles two municipalities. Part of it lies in Tulsa and part in Broken Arrow. Both municipalities allow their officers to work for us and to use their patrol cars on school grounds. Two or three officers are based at the high school and two at the intermediate school.

Our partnership with the police officers benefits the elementary schools, too, because the officers are easily accessible and have authority on all school property.

Our affiliation with the local police departments came about because we wanted to be proactive rather than reactive in security and safety matters, not because we had more problems than we could handle. In fact, at worst, we had just a few random incidents of vandalism.

We also work with the administration to address security problems if and when they arise.

Together we've created a security task force, composed of staff and administrators, that's authorized to look into security concerns. That way, both sides are aware of the issues and work together to solve them. It's never a matter of our having to bring things up at the bargaining table.

This task force has spoken districtwide with staff in all job categories, administrators, and PTA leaders. There's no question that the overwhelming consensus is that police presence on campus is a good deal.

The police who work at the schools are members of our Association, which bargains their salaries.

They're paid an hourly rate and if they work up to 30 hours a week, they receive all member benefits, including sick leave, health insurance, life insurance—even retirement, if they work the required 10 years.

The officers' duties include patrolling school hallways as well as the grounds. They walk through the buildings at various times throughout the day. This is done primarily for psychological reasons.

The officers do carry pistols and billy clubs. In fact, they wear their uniforms with all gear intact.

Most of the officers have worked for us for a number of years and have formed friendly relationships with the kids.

The kids get used to being around the officers, to seeing their badges and their vehicles, and consequently learn to respect them and their job. I believe this relationship builds a positive influence that lasts a lifetime.

We also feel that, by hiring local police, we get the most for our money. Rather than going through an outside security firm to contract for school guards, we get well-trained, police officers for the same price.

Just this past year, we added a new security measure: gates in the high school parking lot. The gates are kept closed when the kids are in class, except for one at the main entrance in case some students arrive late or must leave before the end of the day.

That gate is staffed by a police officer, who monitors traffic coming and going. It's the same after classes end for the day. Having just one gate available helps keep out persons who have no business at the school.

We're convinced that if we didn't have the police officers, if instead we had merely changed security measures, we wouldn't have the same positive result.

The badge of a police officer says louder than anything else that we mean business, that school safety is a top priority. And it says it like nothing else can.

Having municipal police patrol a school to ensure safety and security should be a last resort, something to consider only when all else fails.

As adults, we have a responsibility to nurture children so they can adapt themselves to society. We should do that job as well as we can before we bring in outsiders.

If we bring police patrols onto school grounds, what's next? Do we bring in police officers to live with us in our homes to guarantee our well-being and end domestic violence?

Rather than rushing to bring in outside help, we should reevaluate our security measures if we want our schools to be safe.

My own suburban school was the scene of a violent act about six years ago. One student shot another student in the cafeteria at lunch time. The victim is still partially paralyzed.

That shooting caused us to reevaluate our school security policies. As a result, we've implemented new, stronger rules and procedures.

But, with time, memory fades. We haven't had a recurrence of a violent crime, and, as a result, we've become complacent. The passing of time has dulled our memories.

New policies are blending with old ones. This is typical human behavior: we become comfortable in routine, everyday events, and drift into carelessness.

But this doesn't mean we should go from one extreme to another and call in the police. Rather we must be ever vigilant and routinely practice the security measures that are in place.

I do this everyday in my own chemistry lab by requiring students to wear eye protection. Just because there's never been a serious accident in any of my classes doesn't mean my students shouldn't be prepared for one.

Schools should adhere to this same philosophy.

First and foremost, we need to establish the issue of security and safety as a top priority for everyone—from the top administrator to the part-time employee.

Then we need to look long and hard at how we approach school security and make changes where necessary. It's important to be proactive rather than reactive.

We might start by asking: How many entrances and exits does the school have? Are any of them unattended? Are the students well-disciplined?

Communication/intercom systems should work, not be just fixtures on the wall. Student safety plans should be followed, not ignored.

Monitoring devices, already in place in many stores, banks, and museums, should be considered by schools with serious problems.

A good security program requires dedication—much planning and careful implementation.

But doing whatever it takes may not be an easy task for some districts, especially in these days of shrinking budgets. That's why it's so important that everyone recognize security as a top priority.

I suspect that when many of our schools were built, no thought was even given to security because it wasn't an issue. But, as we all know, times have changed, and so have the types and numbers of security issues facing schools—and they haven't changed for the better. This is a reflection of changes in our society as a whole.

It's no news to readers that today's teachers must deal routinely with students who bring to class weapons, drugs, electronic devices like beepers and cellular phones, and more.

These tough times call for tough decisions. Young thugs and criminals shouldn't be permitted to attend classes and influence our schools. Weapons and violence must be removed.

A school is part of the overall community and everyone has a stake in what happens there.

In today's society, we all too often look for a quick fix: someone else to take care of our problems. But it's our responsibility to seek solutions and apply them ourselves.

Making our schools police substations isn't the best course to take.

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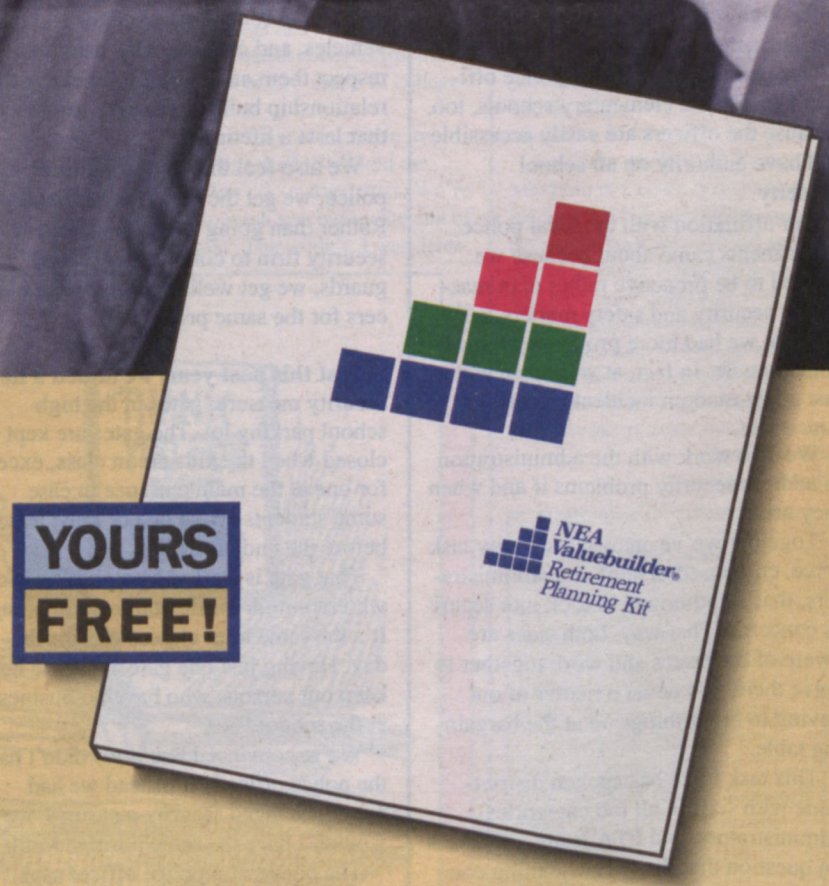

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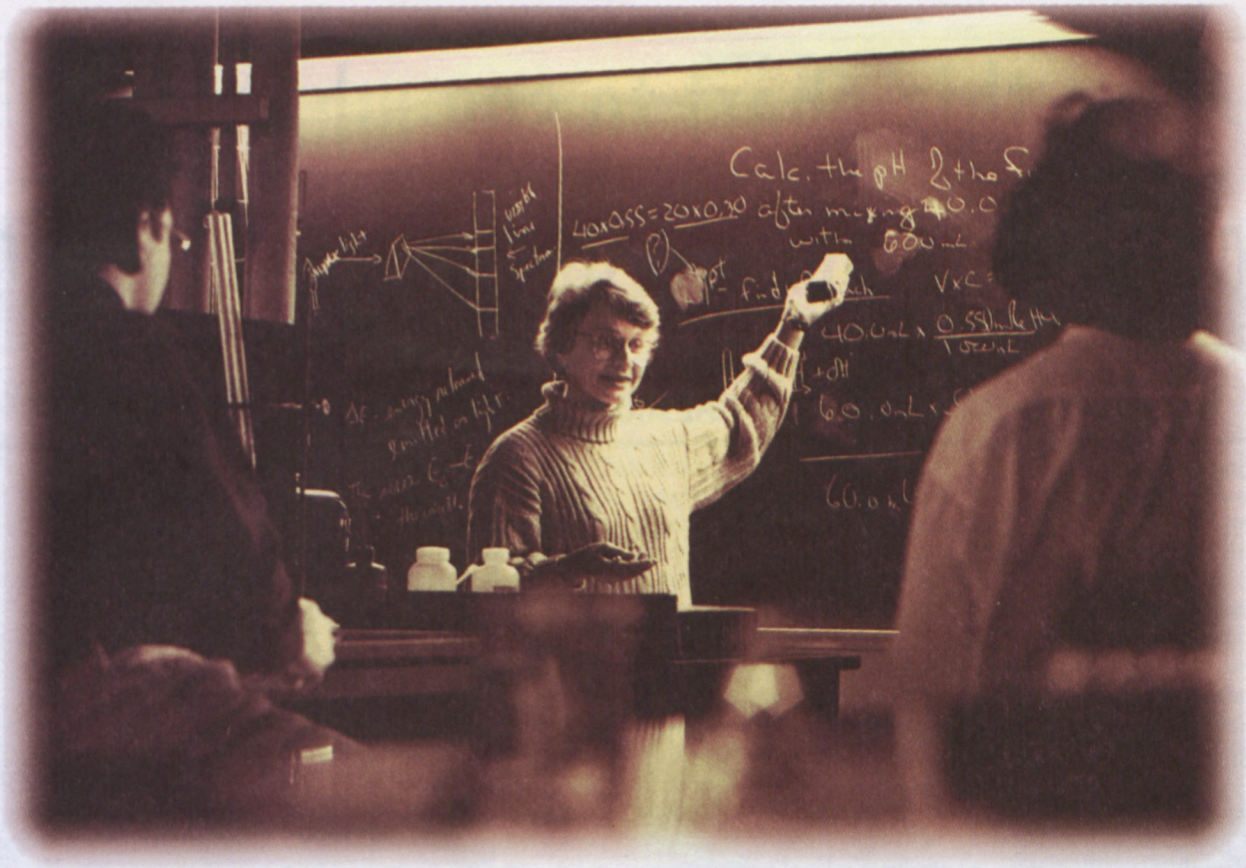

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